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SERMONS.

THE
SACRED YEAR:
SERMONS

FOR THE
PRINCIPAL SUNDAYS AND HOLY DAYS, FROM THE
FEAST OF ST. ANDREW TO THE NINETEENTH
SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

BY THE
VERY REV. THOMAS S. PRESTON, V.G.,
PASTOR OF ST. ANN'S CHURCH.

"Voluntaria oris mei beneplacita fac Domine: et judicia tua doce me."

THIRD EDITION, GREATLY ENLARGED.

NEW YORK:
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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE first edition of this book having been exhausted, the author issues a new edition in an enlarged form, with several additional sermons. It has been a great consolation to him to know that his efforts have not been without their effect upon some souls, and he only desires, in whatever way he safely may, to enlarge his sphere of usefulness. He humbly begs the prayers of all who may read his work, that God may be pleased to bless it to the better understanding and more thorough practice of our holy religion. When Catholics realize that they are the light of the world and the salt of the earth, they will become more anxious to "let their light so shine before men, that they may see their good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven."

T. S. P.

NEW YORK, October 19, 1866.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following sermons are in substance what the author has, at various times, preached during his service in the holy ministry. They have been reduced to writing, and published, in the hope that they may be of some little use at the present time, and may subserve the interests of religion. There is, without doubt, great need of devotional works in our language, and every one should do what he can to impress the truths of faith upon Catholics, or to make them known to his countrymen. Though the age be very material, yet there is a spirit of inquiry, which, under the blessing of God is daily leading earnest souls to conversion. Catholics need to be aroused to the standard of holiness, which is not only their only safety, but the most effectual means of recommending

their religion. And many who are external to the Church, are withheld from our communion, because they mistake and misunderstand our doctrines. We ought then to labor with zeal and charity, doing all we can in our several stations, both by word and example, for the extension of the true faith, which all men need for their salvation. We are only stewards of the truth of God, and must one day give account for the use we have made of so sacred a treasure. No wealth can buy that faith which is the greatest of all Divine gifts. It comes to us through the free and undeserved mercy of our Redeemer. How earnestly, then, should we prize this gift, and how anxious should we be to communicate it to others! It is in this spirit that this work is given to the public, and humbly offered at the feet of that Mercy which alone can bless it, while it can pardon its defects.

T. S. P.

FEAST OF THE PATRONAGE OF S. JOSEPH, 1864.

Invocation.

O, HOLY Joseph, spouse of the ever blessed Mother of God, guardian of the Church, and protector of the priesthood ; accept the unworthy offering laid at thy feet, on thy festal day, that in thy pure hands, and through thy intercession, it may in some humble way promote the glory of Jesus, and the extension of the one true faith. Amen.

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SERMON I.

OBEDIENCE.

“And they immediately leaving their nets, followed Him.”
S. MATTHEW, iv. 20.

For the Feast of S. Andrew.

THE Christian year begins with a festival in commemoration of the apostle S. Andrew. He was called, with S. Peter, to the ministry of Christ, but he first believed on the Lord, and brought to His feet his brother Simon. “He first findeth his brother Simon, and said to him, We have found the Messias. And he brought him to Jesus.”

The gospel for the day records the history of his call to the apostleship. Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, and an occurrence singularly adapted to the spiritual lesson He was about to teach, marked the plain providence of God.

“Andrew and his brother were casting a net into the sea,” when the Lord said unto them,

“Come after me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” They were poor laborers, toiling at their honest trade for their daily bread. They were firm believers in the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and were waiting for the consolation of Israel; but they had never ventured to hope that they were to be the princes of the Messiah’s kingdom. Simon was casting his net into the sea, little dreaming of the day when all the children of God should be intrusted to his care. Now the Christ stands upon the shore, and calls them to be fellow-laborers with Him. There is no doubt that this must have been to them a dark saying. What could it mean, to be fishers of men? They did not know. All they knew was, that *He* called them to His service, whom they believed to be a Prophet sent of God; whom the forerunner, John, had pointed out as the Lamb of God. Called thus by His outward word and inward grace, they at once obeyed, and immediately left their nets, and followed Him. Who but He who stood before them, their Maker and Redeemer, could estimate the sacrifice they were making? They themselves could see before them the loss of worldly wealth, and a life of poverty and reproach.

But could they have looked on to what *we now see*, would not their bold hearts have trembled, fainted, and failed? To relinquish all, home, friends, comforts,—to follow Him who had not where to lay His head,—to accept of toil, sorrow, persecution, death,—these things, involved in their ready choice, were all known to Him who leads His servants step by step, and makes His grace sufficient for the day. The lake they left was their home: the trade they forsook was their earthly *all*. This one step was taken, and this decided all. Their lot was cast in with Christ, both to suffer and to reign with Him. And as the sorrow consequent upon their obedience was mercifully opened upon them as they could bear it, so their glory was hid from their eyes. Poor fishermen, they were chosen to attend the Lord of heaven and earth, to be the companions and followers of their God, to be the builders of His church, and to sit on the apostolic thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Jacob. Had they known all this, all they afterwards experienced, all they now know in the light of the beatific vision, how could they have endured the sight? But they were the chosen vessels of grace, humble and pure in heart, and God had preferred

them to the wise and prudent, to whom the divine condescensions seemed foolishness.

The apostle S. Andrew, as he was the first of the twelve to believe on our Lord, is an especial example of that obedience which in every thing promptly follows the divine will. It is not simply to perform some external works required by the commandments or providence of God. It is that disposition of heart which renounces self, and only seeks the intimation of the divine pleasure. We know little of that heroic life which followed S. Andrew's first obedience. His trials and his victories are written in heaven. After the great day of Pentecost, it fell to his lot to preach the gospel in Scythia and in the region of Achaia, where he was crucified for his Master. When he saw his cross at a distance, he is said to have exclaimed, "Hail, precious cross, that has been consecrated by the body of my Lord, and adorned with His limbs as with rich jewels! I come to thee exulting and glad; receive me with joy into thy arms, O good cross, that hast received beauty from the touch of my Master. I have ardently loved thee; long have I sought thee; now thou art found by me, and art made ready for my waiting soul. Receive me

into thy arms, taking me from among men, and present me to my King, that He who redeemed me on thee, may receive me by thee." The same spirit that led him to forsake his nets and his father's house, and at once to go after Christ led him through the hardships of his apostleship, and sustained him in the agony of his baptism of blood.

Simple, childlike, and unreserved obedience is then the lesson of this festival, and the most appropriate of all virtues for the beginning of the sacred year. Without it we can accomplish nothing in the spiritual life. We cannot save our souls in our own way, we must follow the way which infinite mercy has chosen. The law of God and the precepts of His Church must be fulfilled to the letter; and to the faith which He has revealed, every thought must be in subjection. The omniscient Judge could not accept a merely external service, for in creatures endowed with free will he must exact an intelligent obedience. And he who does not prostrate his finite understanding before the infinite God, has not begun the practice of true religion. And moreover, the all-wise Creator has a special probation for each one of His subjects. He leads

us as a shepherd leads his flock, and our perfection consists in following Him wherever He guides us. Of the many virtues which we need, not one is more sadly wanting among us, or more imperiously required for the work of grace which the Holy Spirit would accomplish in and through us. The sanctification of one soul is dearer to God than the external homage of the whole universe. He is a jealous lover of souls, and He seeks to draw us to Himself, but He can only triumph in hearts subdued unto His will, and prepared by thorough discipline to obey the inward promptings of grace. Sometimes He calleth us to special duties, and sometimes even to sacrifices. They who are ready for the sound of His gracious voice, are led along in paths where worldly men see nothing, and carnally prudent men hear nothing. But the maker of their spirits communes with their secret hearts, and in private teaches them the treasures of divine wisdom. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." The foundation of all high sanctity is laid in self-renunciation, and entire rejection of our own will. The saints accomplished nothing until they had practically learned this lesson; and if we

see little of heroic virtue now, it is because this first step is not taken. The world ignores the religion which is formed upon this model ; and its spirit has far too much influence in the Church. It would really persuade us that we can gain Christ, and yet give up nothing else for Him ; that we can retain every earthly wish, and still possess the enduring riches of heaven. But even reason teaches us that God cannot be obeyed while passion, pride, or self-love rule in our hearts. We cannot be the slaves of any sin, and at the same time the servants of God. We are forced to follow the apostle's example, and to leave all things, before we can freely go after our divine Master. We must sincerely in spirit renounce the world while we live in it, forgetting its maxims and judgments ; and we must even die to ourselves, before we can be admitted to the familiar converse of our Redeemer, or receive His chaste spiritual embraces. Obedience, in its large sense, is but another name for religion itself. To show us a perfect example, the Church continually brings before us the immaculate Virgin, whose great dignity as mother of God did not make her so blessed, as her constant obedience to every word and wish of her celes-

tial spouse. She followed her Beloved in every act of her life, and her steps kept pace with the fast operations of His grace. Hence the Canticles sing, "How beautiful are thy steps, O daughter of the king; to a company of horsemen have I compared thee." Or if we seek even a higher example, behold the incarnate Word submitting to the infirmities of our nature, humbling Himself beneath the contempt of His own creatures, and bending in the garden under the weight of our transgressions. "Not my will, but Thine be done," was the spirit of all His deeds and sufferings. His saints have partaken of His humility, and love has given them strength to follow in His footsteps. Likeness to Him is the rule and measure of sanctity.

The reward of obedience is the favor of God, which sanctifies the soul in this life, and prepares it for eternal joys hereafter. When the human will is renounced, the great Sanctifier carries on without resistance His gracious work. He takes us into His own hands, purges us from our dross, pours light into our hearts as we can bear it, and makes even the most barren soul to blossom as the rose. It matters not what may be our lots. He is always with us, and in

His company we never can be weary or go astray. Little by little the most difficult heights of virtue are reached, and the poor sinner, all unconscious of his progress, lays down his whole load of sin, and learns to emulate the life of angels, who are swifter than light to fulfil the commandment of their Maker. Because the divine visitations are not sensible, they are none the less real. Great works are not accomplished in a moment. Step by step we go down into the valley of mortification, there to lose our selfish wills; and step by step do we ascend the mountain where God unveils His glory. The simple call to the apostle was, "Come after me." We do not see our way in the distance, or know at once the results of obedience. The present duty is enough for the faithful servant. His Lord's hand and voice, clearly seen and heard, leave for him no choice. They lead him on where often he sees no path, where he knows not the journey's end. Like Abraham going forth to the land of promise and trusting to the divine guidance alone, the Christian pilgrim travels from this evil world to an enduring Canaan. There is a pillar of cloud before him by day, and a pillar of fire by night. At last the haven of the

voyager is won, where bright mansions are prepared, and where the undefiled in the way shall see their Lord face to face, and be wholly conformed to His image.

To such obedience, with its rewards in time and eternity, we are called by our very title as followers of Christ. It is no counsel of perfection reserved for chosen souls, it is the one way of salvation. All who would attain heaven must serve God supremely ; and there is no one who can at the same time serve Him and mammon. The world must take care of its votaries, and crown them with such rewards as it has to give. The Lord of life found us in our sins, sought us when we had no thought of Him, washed us in His blood, bid us come after Him, and for our sacrifice promised us heaven. A crown of glory awaits our ready obedience, when we shall have done and suffered all that He commands.

And what is it, my brethren, that He now asks of us? It is not always in great things that we are to show our love to Him. It is in little things that He often most plainly manifests His care of us, and that we are called to prove our sincerity. Here the finger of God is clearly

seen shaping our course. Can we doubt what He requires us to do, if we for a moment listen attentively for His voice? Behold, He has a call for every one of us, which the quick ear of faith may hear, which many hear and disregard. In the silence of thy soul, by the uneasy whisperings of thy conscience, thou shalt learn His will. He calls at every morning's sun, at every evening's warning of thy death and last account. Every joy comes from Him: every sorrow is His faithful monitor. Every disappointment is meant to teach thee how in Him alone is perfect truth and peace. Every shadow that obscures thy path is both a friendly teacher and a gentle type of those thick shades whence all God's light has gone, of that deep darkness which thy sins deserve. There may be festering sores within thee, great wounds unhealed; or evil may lurk a friendly guest in that secret chamber where thy Maker would find a rest. Sin may have cast its roots into thy heart, and around its growing tendrils thy affections may have long entwined themselves. It is the undying worm which is eating up thy life. Conscience, trembling and uneasy once, may be sleeping now, and can hardly arouse to listen to

its Redeemer's voice. Perhaps thou hast not truly lamented thy past transgressions, or sincerely uncovered them in the tribunal of forgiving mercy. Thy besetting enemy has not forsaken thee, for thou hast not put thy foot upon his neck. He lingers around thee, watches thine idle hours, and waits for thy first negligence, that he may enter by the open door. God has a call for thee; He bids thee seek a true repentance, shows thee thy sins as thou hast never seen them before, and asks thee to humble thyself beneath the cross. He begs thee to take His light, and search out all the dark places of thy heart. O fellow-sinner, take heed how thou turnest a deaf ear to these monitors of the Holy Spirit; take heed how thou sayest nay to the merciful pleadings of thy God. It is He who stands knocking at the door of thy heart, and with His worn and bleeding feet He sought thee. Thou hast many wants which are known to Him alone. Thou art hungry; thou art thirsty; thou art blind; thou art naked. He gives His own flesh to thee for food, and His blood is the wine which will heal thy wretchedness. He will restore sight to thine eyes, and clothe thee with the garments of incorruption. But the way of life

is the way of His loving correction, and the shadow of Mount Calvary covers the path of the just. His heart is tender, and His love is jealous; and coldness or neglect will grieve Him away. What wilt thou do in the waters of affliction, if His everlasting arms are not under thee? Thou wilt then go through the valley of death without His rod and staff. Where canst thou find heaven, if His blessed face be withdrawn from thee?

O my brethren, to whatever God calls us, to whatever He gives us to do, let us apply ourselves with all our hearts.

This day another sacred year dawns upon us, another circuit of the Sun of Righteousness is begun. Are we not called to a newer life, to truly give up ourselves unto the obedience of our Lord and Master? How long shall we treat our gracious Redeemer with reserve, obeying only in part, and refusing to do that which tries us most, to give up our very hearts? Oh let us resolve to follow each and every intimation of His will; and when our hearts truly trust in Him, He will lead us through the changes of time in the secret rest of His own tabernacle, and at last will make us fit for His own gracious purpose.

In this world we see naught but the present duty, the one step before us; hercafter we shall see the road by which mercy led us, by which wondrous love saved us. "What I do, thou knowest not now," are often the words of Jesus to the faithful soul; but His promise is, "thou shalt know hereafter." Oh, may God help us, and strengthen us to truly obey His will in all things, that we, like the apostle, may leave behind all earthly things and follow Him alone.

SERMON II.

CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST.

“But when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand.”
S. LUKE, xxi. 28.

For the First Sunday in Advent.

THE Church begins her sacred year by the solemn warnings of death and judgment. The signs of the Son of Man are all around us. The day of wrath is hastening upon us, and angels are preparing in the desert a highway for our God. The high places must be brought low, and the valleys must be exalted; the crooked ways must be made straight, and the rough places smooth. Pride must be laid low in the dust, and the humble must be lifted up to welcome the coming of our incarnate God. Behold, He cometh in the clouds to judge the world, to recompense the just, and to punish His enemies. What part, my brethren, are we to take in these fearful scenes? How are we to abide his com-

ing? "Who shall be able to think of that day, and who shall stand to see Him? for He is like the refiner's fire, and like the fuller's herb." Sinners as we are, how shall we be safe in that hour when all that is not in God shall be burned as the stubble in the fire? Alas, Satan may be our deceiver in these days of grace. He may be blinding our eyes, seeking to waste our time in trifles, to delude us with false hopes. The world may have its thousand cares, and self-love its vain excuses. It is easy to be blind, to put off any real self-knowledge, to choose the easiest course, to fasten around our souls the chains of sin, to lie down in darkness and never see light. This is man's natural course, and the great enemy will never cease to urge him on, shutting out the sight of his danger, and blinding him as to the *end* of that path which leads down to Hell, to the chambers of unending death.

But are we really in earnest to pursue another course, to resist the world, and self, and Satan, to give ourselves up to the works of religion? Has God led any of us to fly to the cross of His dear Son, to trust in the exhaustless abyss of His love, to lose our love of self in the

love of Christ, our God and our all? Then let us rejoice. Let such "look up, and lift up their heads, for behold, their redemption is at hand." The *end* cometh, the end of sin, of sorrow, trial, pain; the end when God shall be all in all, when He who is the Beginning and the End, shall sum up all things, and perfect us in Himself.

What then, beloved, are the grounds of a confidence in Him, who is both our Saviour and our Judge? How shall we "so abide in Him, that when He shall appear, we may have confidence and not be confounded by Him at His coming?"

First of all, let us never forget how God hath showed Himself rich in mercy and infinite in goodness. All-powerful to execute His will, He is all-merciful to seek our salvation. Our creation, preservation, and redemption testify to *His* goodness, who, all-perfect and wanting nothing in Himself, has nevertheless bowed down the very heavens for our recovery. Why should we not trust in Him who shed His heart's blood for us, who died for *our very sins*; who ever liveth to make intercession for us? In whom could we trust, if not in Him

who *redeemed us*; who now calleth every sinner to cast off the works of darkness, that He may wash him clean in the blood of His atonement, and clothe him in the garments of light? Verily, in God who has loved us, hath created, redeemed, sanctified us, is an ample ground of our confidence. In the infinite mercy of the triune, unchangeable God is place for a sinner's hope, a sure foundation of peace and consolation. To the doers of His will, He showeth all the treasures of His love; and those whose hearts repose on Him, He makes to trust in Him the more. He filleth up their wants, strengthens their disordered *wills*, calls their affections from earth unto Himself, that they may be at rest in *Him*, whose fulness can wholly fill their souls. Oh, as there is not measure to His almighty love, so there is not end to the confidence a sinner may find in his God.

But, beloved, on our part there must also be a reason for hope, not in ourselves as we are by nature, but in ourselves as we are made by grace. That ground of confidence is a life of good works, which in Jesus Christ we are enabled to bring forth, which by omnipotent grace must flourish in us. We cannot really

draw near to Christ with hearts unchanged, with lives unsanctified : no hope can endure which does not lead to holiness of life, to purity of heart, to watchfulness over self. Confidence, without any solid ground on which to rest, is only presumption, a vain shadow of peace, where God leaves nothing but remorse and fear. We are not to know the value of our good works, or to be accurate judges of our merits ; but if our religion is real, we are doing something, are making some advance in the way of sanctification. We are seeking to know what God requires of us, and are laboring earnestly to fulfil all His commandments. We cannot judge the exact measure of our progress, but we can know whether we are really advancing, or losing ground. According to our desires is our growth in grace ; and hence when love grows cold, and faith falters, we may trace our defection to the fickleness of our own hearts. The divine inspirations have not been wanting, but the precious seed has fallen among thorns, and no fruit has come to perfection. How shall the husbandman expect a bountiful harvest, if he has not toiled with patience in the spring-time ? How can we look for the increase of

spiritual life in our souls, if we are unfaithful to the grace which God has lavished upon us? The daily and diligent performance of good works is the only sign of health, for where there is inaction there is death. There are many who reason away the remorse of conscience, and seek continually for easy ways, which are, after all, but *their own* ways, which never can be *God's ways*!

And what, my brethren, are the works to which God now calleth *us*?

Chiefly, they are, according to our great need, the works of repentance. These works are manifold, nor are they *easy* works. All in our hearts that opposes God must be cast out and forsaken; what we have done by sin, must now be undone by penance. Each wound must be probed, every sin must be brought to light, and all our uncleanness laid open in the sight of Him who shall judge us. Every vain pretension by which we have exalted self and looked down on others, must be renounced, and in fear we must try to judge ourselves, before the awful day when God shall come to try our works. Where sin now defiles us, the blood of Christ must cleanse us; where, through past trans-

.

gressions, we are weak in will, the power of Christ must strengthen us; where, through dependence upon creatures, our affections waver, the love of Christ must *constrain* us. This is the great and fearful work of repentance, to restore what our own hands have spoiled, to work with God and wait on God, till that new nature is *re-made* which once He gave us in His Son, our ever-blessed Lord.

To *this work* let us give ourselves with all our hearts and all our faculties, while now God spares our lives, and calleth us to prepare for His coming. Let us place ourselves before that Judgment which is so near, and let us now do what *then* we would wish to have done. By faith let sinners draw near to that trying scene, when the fever of life shall be over, and things shall be seen as God sees them.

I know that in view of that day, we all shall learn the vanity of time, and the *reality* of the life to come; and by God's grace we may be moved to arise and do what He requires of us. Repentance is the first and great thing, without which all else is vain and worthless. We must go down to the depths of humiliation and contrition, if ever we would rise to the fervor of a

true love to God. Many build upon the sand, and rest their hopes upon the shallow basis of their own conceit. Satan ever tempts the heart to deceive itself, and sets the world against all that is severe or earnest in religion. Yet, trifle as we may, nothing will avail us but the very duty which God requires at our hands. We may put it off from day to day, and make ten thousand excuses to our self-love, but nothing will quench the reproaches of conscience. Our Creator speaks to us, and we must be silent and obedient. It is the voice of Jesus which comes to us in the stillness, or makes itself heard amid all the bustle of the world. His hand, stained with the precious blood, points to the path of penance ; and His voice, which is the music of heaven, is unwelcome because it calls us to the sacrifice of pride or earthly comfort. Take heed lest thou pierce afresh that hand, lest the mild words of warning be changed to the stern sentence of condemnation.

Ah ! what sinner could stand before the consuming fire of God's presence, or look steadfastly on to the tremendous future, did not the Lord of love assure him, by His own sacrament, of the pardon of his sins, receive him again to

His embrace, and bid the current of divine love to flow where guilt had interposed between the soul and its Redeemer? The mountains of our iniquity are colder than the cliffs of the Frozen Ocean; and they chill the life-blood, and shut out the light and heat of the sun of justice. The fruits of repentance must always thus precede any steady growth in grace, any advance in the knowledge and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

From these as the groundwork, as the constant habit of the soul, must we go on to subdue sin in all its subtle lurkings within us, to do good works, to follow all God's will as He reveals it to us, to thoroughly give up ourselves to "Him who hath loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in His blood."

There are those who never seem to gain a quiet confidence in God, who go on in darkness. But such have never begun aright, or are now turning from the narrow way of duty. *Sin*, secret sin, presumptuous sin, sin cherished, blights the fairest promise, carries *death* where God had given *life*, desolates the garden of God. Neglect of God's secret calls, deafness to His faithful warnings, abuse of his constant inspira-

tions, these chill the love that Jesus works in us, and no fruit is brought to perfection. We cannot lift up our heads to see the sign of the Son of Man,—“we have no confidence in Him,—we are confounded by His coming.”

It is sad to think how many are living for the world, without strictness, without any care for their souls. The world calls, and they obey. They have quick ears for every whisper of gain, and their life is one of bustle and excitement in the midst of a thousand snares, but they have no time to give unto God. Their hearts are fixed on earthly things, and they cannot think of the danger which threatens their souls. Such, for whom Christ died, will choose to go on in the ways of pleasure, and die in sin.

These souls, born again, quickened once with divine life, are quenching the Spirit, are binding themselves hand and foot with grave-clothes, and soon must lie down in the corruption of an unending death. How shall such ever lift up their heads, except to call upon the earth to hide them, and the rocks to cover them, “from the face of Him who sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb?”

Yet, beloved, let us arise and prepare even

now to meet the Bridegroom. Let us gird ourselves to the work of God, and pray Him to lead us, sending to us what we need, and guiding us in His holy discipline till every wound is healed, and all our guilt is washed away.

“Let us abide in Him” who for us is incarnate, that man may dwell in God and God in man. None can meet God but they in whom God dwells, who are *in* His Son Jesus Christ, truly members of His life-giving body. So does He who shall come to judge us, first prepare His way in great humility. He is truly born of a Virgin, that we might be born in Him, that He might dwell in us, and in us go forth to meet Himself. O wonder of redeeming love! Never could we bear His second coming, but for the great mystery of His first and lowly advent. Now it is the day of our full redemption. His appearing shall be the hour of glory, when our life shall be revealed and we shall appear with Him in glory. Death shall be swallowed up of life. The body shall be redeemed from death. We shall awake in God’s likeness. Everlasting joy shall be on our heads. “Sorrow and mourning shall flee away.” Then, when all shall fail but God, He Himself,

our indwelling strength, shall be our portion forever. This is Thy work, O Lord ; Jesus this the fruit of Thy passion, "O Lamb of God, who takest away the sin of the world." We have confidence in Thee. Thou wilt guide us to Thy feet, and the smile of Thy mother shall mingle with Thine to welcome us to eternal rest.

SERMON III.

S. JOHN THE BAPTIST, THE ADVENT MODEL.

“And he came unto all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins.”
S. LUKE, iii. 3.

For the Fourth Sunday in Advent.

THE history of our Lord's forerunner is necessarily connected with the mysteries of this season. It was predicted that “Elias the prophet should come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord,”* and that there should be “a voice crying in the desert, Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the wilderness the paths of our God.”† Accordingly, the archangel Gabriel was sent to Zachary to announce to him the miraculous birth of a son. “Thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. He shall be great before the Lord, and shall be filled

* Malachias, iv. 5.

† Isaias, xl. 3.

with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. He shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, that he may turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just, to prepare for the Lord a perfect people." So he was conceived, when Elisabeth was advanced in years, by the especial interposition of Providence. And in accordance with the angel's words, he was purified from sin before his birth by the visitation of the Blessed Virgin. "He was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb." Even before his birth he bore witness to the Lamb of God, whose steps he was to fore-run ; and his reward was the grace of sanctification in body and soul. At his circumcision the angelic prophecy was fulfilled. His name was given in the solemnities of the Jewish rite ; and when all was accomplished, Zachary opened his mouth to utter the sublime strains of his Benedictus. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and wrought the redemption of His people." His birth preceded by a few months only the nativity of our Lord ; but when the opening years of childhood were past, his

life of austerity began its wonderful course. While Jesus was leading His hidden life, working at the carpenter's bench, he was in the desert, cut off from all worldly consolation, feeding upon locusts and wild honey, and clothed with a leathern girdle. Long years were spent in this terrible mortification, until the time of Christ's manifestation approached. Then from the desert he came preaching penance to his countrymen. "Do penance, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Startled by his cry, Judea and Jerusalem went out to hear him, and multitudes were baptized by him in the Jordan, after public confession of their sins. He baptized with water unto repentance, to prepare the sinner to receive the Lamb of God, and His baptism of regeneration. All acknowledged him to be a prophet, while many took him for Elias, or even the Messiah. Nearly the last act of his public ministry was the baptism of our Lord; and in that act he saw the witness of the holy Trinity, and gave his testimony to his great principal. "Behold the Lamb of God; behold Him who taketh away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, "After me cometh a man who is preferred before me, because He was before me. And I

knew Him not, but that He may be made manifest in Israel, therefore am I come baptizing in water.”* As the Son of Mary began to increase, he began to decrease: the morning star, harbinger of day, faded away before the rising sun. Cast into prison for his boldness in rebuking the vice of king Herod, he was at last delivered from his captivity by the hatred of the adulteress, and to all his other glories added the crown of martyrdom. Virgin, prophet, confessor, martyr, his record is written on high, and his eulogy is pronounced by the lips of the incarnate God. “There hath not risen among them that are born of women, a greater than John the Baptist.”†

He is then the Advent model, by his office as the forerunner of our Lord, and by the preaching of penance. The great lesson of his life is mortification, which is the especial duty of this season, and the only right preparation for the nativity of Christ. We cannot but observe how his example rebukes the easy ways of our day, and teaches the necessity of self-denial.

To judge of religion as it appears around us, and to take the popular opinion as an evidence of right and wrong, we must conclude that our

* S. John, i. 29-31.

† S. Matthew, xi. 11.

Lord and His apostles were mistaken, and that S. John was a fanatic. We see our Lord choosing poverty, reproach, and the cross; we see the apostles following in His footsteps, and embracing persecution. The burden of their teaching is contempt for the world. "He that will follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross." "He that hath left father or mother, wife or children, houses or lands for my sake, shall receive a hundred-fold." "He that will save his life, shall lose it; but he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it." It cannot be said that the life of our Lord's forerunner was displeasing to God, and yet there is no penitent in the history of the Church who has practised more wonderful austerity.

The popular religion around us excludes mortification. It tells us that no works of ours can rigidly satisfy the divine justice, and hence that penance has no practical utility. It has no ascetic side, but scouts as superstition the practice of austerity which the Catholic Church has always commended. No better refutation of the false systems of our day could be desired than the comparison of their maxims and practices with the plain language of the New Testament. For

surely God has not changed, nor in the process of time have His precepts lost their significance. S. John teaches us now, and during our probation, to practise mortification according to our state of life. We are not called to go into the desert, to imitate the severity of his penitence, but we are required to deny ourselves, to bridle our passions, to fast, and to take up the cross, when and where our Lord shall command. The Catholic religion has always insisted upon these duties, and although we may be infected by the spirit of the times, we can never dispense ourselves from their performance. If we do not mortify ourselves, we shall lose our souls. This necessity of mortification will appear from the very state of fallen man, from the law of his recovery, and from the effects of sin.

Reason itself may teach us that our race is not in its normal state. There is a curse resting upon us, which even philosophers and poets have been forced to confess. Inanimate nature feels the yoke of bondage, and groans for its redemption. The soul made in the image of its Creator, is estranged from its true light, and wanders amid the ruins of Paradise. Suffering is our natural lot; and fly where we may, we

cannot escape it. We cause in some measure our own pains, and yet very often we suffer innocently for the faults of others. Disease pursues us, and at last to death we must bow down. Affliction desolates the family circle, and little by little robs the heart of its treasure. We try to find satisfaction in ourselves, but the well is not deep enough, and the water is not pure enough to quench our thirst. So God, even in the natural order, draws us to Himself, and leads us to acknowledge our weakness. We are not in Eden, and He would have us remember why those gates were barred against us, and how we are to recover our lost estate. Let the philosopher explain, if he can, why man must pass his life in misery and toil, laboring for nothing, unless there be an eternal reward. Why is the human body, the master-piece of divine skill, subject to the most acute anguish, and at last destined to be taken apart, bone by bone, and mingled with the dust? Why must we suffer in the most tender points, unless in some way to pay a debt we owe to justice?

It will not answer to say that pain is a consequence of physical laws. Who made these laws? He who created physical nature is re-

sponsible for the defects which inhere of necessity in the finite. Suffering belongs not to intelligent nature; it is the fruit of some wilful departure from the laws of our being, or an infliction of the Creator, and for some cause. That cause is sin. The creature has of his free will forsaken the path in which God designed him to walk, and his punishment follows him. He could not suffer enough to atone for one deliberate transgression of the divine commands, and hence there can be no exaggeration. The head of the race sins, and involves all his children in the consequences of guilt. The mother brings forth her child in pain; the infant suffers as it enters into this sinful world, for the shadows of the fall are around it; and the man grows up to take his portion of the cross, until the king of terrors prevails in the battle, and lays him prostrate in the tomb. So God disciplines us by His fatherly correction, and leads us to detachment from things sensible, that we may regain our soundness and recover our lost inheritance. Justice demands our correction, and mercy, with all its energies, can find no other way of reaching the sinner's heart. We are penitents by nature, forced to suffer

mortification, which patiently endured is destined to open to us an Eden where pain shall be unknown, where peace and joy shall possess both soul and body.

The dispensations of Providence are thus directed to the restoration of man to God's image; but they cannot accomplish this end without his co-operation. The human will must accept the law which God has established for our recovery. Penitence will do the work of reparation, for suffering is not only a punishment, it is also purifying. "He that suffers in the flesh ceases from sin." Our Lord has mercifully ordained that the means whereby we escape from the eternal justice shall be the process of our sanctification. If we have sinned we must do penance, and find reconciliation with God by a real conversion of our hearts to Him. The new law amply illustrates this plan of redeeming mercy. Our restoration to God's image has been effected in no other way than by the incarnation and passion of the Son of God. Bethlehem presents us the view of God Himself humbled to take our nature, and coming into the world in all the weakness of childhood. Humility is an unmeaning word,

mortification is an empty sound, when we speak of this condescension of the great Creator. Then the whole life of our Lord upon earth was one succession of sorrow and suffering. Every considerable interior mortification was added to exterior torture and ignominy. In the path which thus our Lord traced, the sinner must follow, if he would seek recovery. In the way of the cross he must find his purification. The example of the atonement must have its due effect in the sanctification of the unjust. Those who suppose that forgiveness does away every obligation to punishment, take a very superficial view of the enormity of sin or the passion of Christ. As sin is a free act of an intelligent agent, so repentance with its necessary concomitants must be freely undertaken, and zealously pursued. The sinner arraigns himself at the bar of his own conscience, finds himself guilty, and offers himself to punishment. Before any chance of forgiveness there must be true sorrow for sin; and this is the greatest interior pang of the soul. This grief, if it come from God, finds vent in self-discipline and self-abnegation. It is no trifling ordeal through which pride is made to pass, when we open in the tribunal of pen-

ance those sins and enormities which we would have no creature know, which we would almost wish to hide from God. Here, in an act of the greatest humiliation, is found some compensation for the injury which the creature's pride has committed against God, and the act of penance falls just where it is most deserved. The way in which God has chosen to absolve the sinner answers directly to the need of man, and preserves the claims of justice. And if mercy and justice meet together here, let us remember how they meet, and why they are reconciled. They meet at the cross of Christ, and are reconciled through the application of the most precious blood. The shedding of this all-saving blood was pain to the divine victim of our salvation, and in like manner its application implies pain to the repenting soul. We "sow in tears to reap in joy;" we suffer in the flesh to cease from sin. So the good Lord leads every soul along the way of the cross, and each pilgrim must go to Calvary, and in its deep shadows learn the mysteries of divine love, the need of purification, and the power of grace to cleanse even that which was most defiled.

The effects of sin upon the soul and its rela-

tion to God, still further prove the need of mortification. Sin directly implies guilt or obligation to punishment, and inflicts a stain or injury upon our moral nature. It is then impossible, in the nature of things, for the guilty to escape suffering, and we know of no way in which the stains of sin can be wiped away, unless it be by pain, which the Holy Ghost compares to the refiner's fire. We know there is such a fire for imperfect souls beyond the grave, and we believe that sovereign mercy has kindled something of that fire in the land of the living, and in the day of our probation.

We say therefore that the whole Christian scheme for man's recovery is the way of penance, in which, relying upon divine grace, the pilgrim patiently walks, laboring day by day to undo the work of the past, to purify himself for the vision of God, that he may one day be arrayed in linen clean and white, which is the sanctification of the saints.

Solemn indeed are the last strains of the ancient prophecy, "I will send you Elias the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."* So before the first

* Malachias, iv. 5.

coming of the great Redeemer, the voice of the prophet was heard in the way beyond the sea where the great light had dawned, and where the people still walked in darkness. So comes every year the prophet who is to prepare the way of the incarnate God in our hearts, to preach penance, to turn our eyes from the vain things of sense to the realities of the eternal life. The Son of God desires to be new born in our souls, and His forerunner comes from the desert to teach us the lessons of holy discipline and patient mortification.

Let us hear his voice. Every valley must be exalted and every hill must be made low ; the rough places must be made plain, and the crooked ways must be made straight. The religion of Christ's forerunner is the divine religion.

Let us apply ourselves to the work of our salvation, let us go to the desert to commune awhile with the maker of our spirits. In heart at least let us renounce the world, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, the kingdom that shall endure forever. Let us turn from every way of sin, and send up our Confiteor to God Almighty, to Blessed Mary, ever merciful, to

S. Michael the Archangel, to Blessed S. John the Baptist, the great model of this season, and our confession shall be heard, and God shall send His grace into our souls, and prepare us to meet Himself.

SERMON IV.

THE LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

“And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”—S. JOHN, i. 5.

For the Feast of our Lord's Nativity.

THIS sacred festival calls us together to pay our vows to Him who as at this time became incarnate for our salvation. On this day, much to be observed throughout all generations, it is meet that they should be glad, whose faithful hearts have made ready a place for the infant Redeemer. Advent with its penitential lessons is gone. The fulness of time is come, and we are before the altar of “the Word made flesh,” with all the outward tokens of our homage. His tabernacles, at all times so lovely, are now adorned with all that the mind can gather of beauty and honor. Light breaks forth in the presence of the Creator, and earth smiles around his resting-place. With angels and

archangels we welcome Him to the world which sin has defaced ; we rejoice before Him, whose lowly birth is the life of our dying race. The great event which we celebrate took place in time, and He, whose eternity cannot be measured, was born a child, lived upon earth as a man, and His work from the manger to the cross is marked by earthly years and hours. God became an infant, and this is His birthday. What a wonder ! what a depth of love !

We were in a deep darkness, whose shadow covered the whole earth. Men wandered in the ways of sin. The soul was restless and degraded, the body was the prey of passion and vice. "They looked to the earth, and behold trouble and darkness, weakness and distress, and a mist following them, and they cannot fly away from their distress." A thick pall hung over the heathen nations, whose idolatries and crimes hourly called for the divine vengeance. The Church of God was rent by divisions, and prostrated under the heathen oppressor. A Roman governor ruled in the holy city, and worldliness profaned the temple, from which, long before, the token of God's presence had departed. The piety of patriarchal days seemed

almost extinct, or burned in a few faithful hearts who silently and prayerfully waited for the consolation of Israel. In this deep darkness came down the light from heaven. "God looked, and there was none to help. He sought, and there was none to give aid," therefore "He prepared His holy arm in the sight of all the Gentiles, and the ends of the earth saw His salvation." When man was at his utmost weakness, the might of the Lord interposed. And the light was indeed greater than the darkness. God Himself came down, and the consuming fire, before which the angels trembled, shone in the deep wretchedness of man's sin.

And what a welcome did He receive from those He came to redeem? While the heavenly hosts were waiting around Bethlehem, there chanting new songs of joy, men had no hearts to receive their Saviour. In the city of David there was no room for David's son, and she who was blessed above all women must bring forth her child in a stable, and lay Him to His first slumber among the beasts of the field. In a manger lies the promise of the patriarch, the hope of Jacob, the pillar of cloud which led the Israelites, the glory which abode between the

cherubim. Who come to worship Him of all His chosen people? Not the great; not the rich; not the priests of His temple. Joseph and Mary adore Him with the tribute of their whole being. Joseph is a poor carpenter, and Mary, though descended of a regal line, has no title upon earth. There were shepherds on the hills, keeping watch by night over their flocks. They saw the light of God's glory, and heard the accents of the angelic song: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good-will." They came, led by the inspiration of that song, to welcome the birth of the great king. Verily "the Light shone in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world received Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." It staggers our thought, and baffles comprehension, to see the eternal God taking our flesh, and becoming a man; but it confounds us the more to think of man's ingratitude, of the blindness of those for whom He so humbled Himself. His sufferings begin with the hour of His birth. He is rejected now and driven into a stable, as ere long He shall be bound with the thong, and

nailed to the cross. Yet, let the creature refuse His grace or not, He is the only light of the world. His beams shine not in vain; they penetrate into the recesses of the desert; they go down to the depths of the ocean; they illuminate the cliffs of the mountain. "He enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world." "He is set for the ruin and the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted." "The Gentiles shall walk in His light, and kings in the brightness of His rising." The face of the whole earth has been changed by His birth, and a new era of peace has begun. He shall open His infant arms, and they shall embrace all tribes and tongues. The world can never forget His coming; the human intellect shall be forced to acknowledge its Deliverer, the human heart to turn to its only rest.

But the true Light not only came to the darkness of the Jewish and Gentile world; it also shone in the midst of our misery and sin. His human generation was our regeneration "The Light shines now in darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not." He came to renew us after His own pure image. Once we were

like God, until the fall defaced and marred that similitude. He took our nature, that by it He might remake us, and reproduce in us even a nearer likeness than we had lost. He came therefore to an intestine warfare, to a contest with the strongholds of sin, that He might work a radical cure. First there arose a morning star, borrowing its light from Him; and Mary, daughter of Eve, and yet immaculate, was born. Here was a pure humanity, over which the adversary had no power. Soon the Sun of justice arose, and the source of light was revealed in our nature. He was God, almighty to save; and man like ourselves, that He might stretch out human arms to grapple with the foe. Here was a pure humanity formed of Mary's blood, not only victorious over the devil, but full of life to be communicated to our lost race. He is our model, and our physician; the image of our soundness, and the worker of our restoration. Fallen man cannot bear the sight of God, still less see himself in the shadows which blind his eyes. When the beams of God our Redeemer shone into our misery, they revealed its depths. No one but God could have raised us up, as He has done, by being Himself our light,

taking our nature, and dwelling in us, that we might dwell in Him. He came to be our everlasting light; not merely to shine upon us, but to fill us with Himself, pervading us wholly to make us light in Him. Continuing what He ever was, very God of very God, He became what He was not, perfect man. By the power of the Holy Ghost He was conceived and born of the blessed Virgin, and took a sinless humanity, such as Adam's was when he came unstained from the divine hand. No sin could approach Him, and hence He could free us from all sin. Thus did the Creator, whose light is the glory of heaven, become the light of fallen man. He not only came to us, but He became one with us. The end of His incarnation was the exaltation of man to the glory from which He stooped. Made members of His body, we became partakers of the divine nature. Such is the plan of salvation. The mystery of grace is Emmanuel, "God with us."

There was a time when He who was born of a Virgin, was new-born in us, when light came into our souls and bodies in all its strength. Precious were those days of illumination, and we hardly knew the treasure that was within us.

Bright is the remembrance of purity in Him, the source of purity. We were made anew after the likeness of His holy childhood. Then we were fit companions for Jesus and Mary, and the stable of Bethlehem would have been our fitting home. Innocence would have been at rest in the atmosphere of that humble cave. And had we then died, before sin had laid its polluting finger upon our white garments, we should have ascended to the feet of the Virgin, to be lasting mementoes of her infant Son. Yet to many of us these days are gone; and this sacred festival, with all its joy, brings home the sad consciousness of what we have lost. We are not little children, of whom is the kingdom of heaven. We have been into the world, and have been defiled. Numberless stains mar our baptismal purity. We have seen and heard and touched and tasted sin, and the cleanness of conscience we once had is gone. The heart of a child, with its guilelessness and docility, is no longer ours, since Satan has taught us independence of restraint, and confidence in our own powers. The affections with which we should have clung to Christ have wasted upon creatures, as through all self has been sought,

and God has been forgotten. Have we reaped any thing but bitterness? Have we found peace in our wanderings from God? Have creatures, with all their smiles, made up for the loss of Jesus and His Virgin Mother? Will any gain we may have made fill up the void in our hearts, or repay us for the sacrifice of our innocence? Can we not say in the language of holy Job: "Who will grant me, that I might be according to the months past, according to the days when God kept me? When His lamp shone over my head, and I walked by His light in darkness? As I was in the days of my youth, when God was secretly in my tabernacle, when the Almighty was with me?" The sense of want is the first step to recovery; and God, who at this time brings before us the child Jesus, the model of our new birth, has a remedy for our sins against the light. The true Light was in us, and our darkness did not comprehend it, our wills prevailed against the will of our Redeemer. We are not without hope that these precious days may return, that we may regain the innocence of our baptism, that He who then came so graciously to be a light within us, may once more chase away our dark-

ness. Another baptism is provided for the sinner.

But the baptism of penance is not like the painless washing of regenerating grace. It is a work of labor and perseverance, in which the strongest often faint, and the most fervent grow weary. It is the work of a lifetime. Yet severe as is the baptism of tears, it is the only remedy for the guilty, the only way to peace and the illuminating grace of God. By true sorrow for past transgression, faithful use of the sacraments, and grateful love, we may become again as little children, sealed with pardon, and renewed in grace. Shadows shall be dispelled from our heart and understanding, self shall be trampled down by shame and penance, and meekness take the place of empty pride. Once more the likeness of Bethlehem shall be seen in us; and, re-made the sons of God, we shall joyfully run after our Deliverer, or thankfully bear the cross which He has hallowed.

Such thoughts do not mar the festivity of this day, or bring discord into the hymns of praise which ascend from earth and heaven. They contain the restoration of the sinner to God's image, the message of mercy to the

broken in heart; they call the Christian to newness of life in his Saviour's birth; they proclaim the power of Emmanuel, our "God with us." They magnify His love, who now appears as a little child in Bethlehem, our Redeemer and our example.

How can we participate in the joy of this festival, if we are not new creatures in Him; if, having fallen from the grace of His birth, we have not risen by the way of His cross? "The Light still shines in darkness," and our darkness does not comprehend it. Darkened by sin, we will not come to the Light, lest our deeds be reproved. We are not fit to welcome the Deliverer, whom in our hearts we slight, whom we will not suffer to be our light. Bethlehem is no home for us.

Yet there is joy to the true in heart, though risen from the grave of sin, though clinging, like Magdalene to the sacred feet which she washed with her tears. "Arise, be enlightened for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Here speak the love and tenderness of childhood, stretching forth its hands of compassion with infant tears to all mankind. Here is the resting-place of inno-

cence. Here virginal chastity may light her torch. Here penitence may find a home. Here in the depths of the divine lowliness may the lowly rest. Here the curse of nature is taken off, and there is a birth without pain. Here is our new birth to life eternal. Here is power to melt the soul, that God may pour into it a superhuman love, and fashion it after the model of the new-creation,—the holy child Jesus. Here, then, they who have dwelt in night may rejoice, for the Sun of justice has arisen, and His light “enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world.”

If any still choose darkness, let them know that this is no day of gladness for them. The infant who rests so meekly on Mary’s bosom, and seems only to watch for her smile, is the Judge of the living and dead. He comes to bring peace only to men of good-will; “to all others, He brings “not peace, but a sword.” ‘Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to Me, for the kingdom of heaven is for such.’”

SERMON V.

THE INCARNATION.

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”
S. JOHN, i. 14.

The Feast of our Lord's Nativity.

IN these simple words, the evangelist declares the mystery which we celebrate on this day. The eternal Son of God has taken our nature: has become a child in the womb of the blessed Virgin, and is this day born into our sinful world. The great event, so long expected by patriarchs and prophets, has found us prepared. In a season of humiliation and prayer, we have made ready our hearts, and have been watching in Bethlehem for the accomplishment of God's promise. We saw Mary and Joseph in their long journey; we marked their steps as they came to the city of David, until repulsed from the inn, and finding no house open to receive them, they took refuge in a stable. We kept

vigil the whole night around that cave, and at midnight, when the stars were brightest, a heavenly glory covered that rude abode. We saw in the distance a band of shepherds, whose flock were sleeping on the hill. Suddenly a strain of music, such as mortal ear had never before heard, broke upon us. Harps softer than the summer air, and deeper and richer than all human harmonies, were attuned to the new song. "Glory in the highest to God, and peace on earth to men of good will." And as the undulations of this melody fell upon the earth, and spread themselves upon the breeze, peace seemed to fall into the depths of the soul of man. The shepherds were holding converse with the angels, and led by these bright messengers, they came to the door of the stable. Reverently we entered with them, and kneeling there we saw the Virgin in the transport of her first joy, clasping her treasure to her bosom, and raining kisses upon her little child. The mystery was accomplished. We could not express our joy. We caught something of the influence of Mary's ecstasy, and silently to Him who knew our hearts we offered our whole being. This little infant is our God, our Redeemer, our all; our only

hope in life, our only deliverer from death. This morning's dawn still found us in adoration, and brought us before the altar of the incarnate Lord, with our most grateful songs. What shall we render to Him for all His benefits? Life is too short, and eternity is not long enough to worthily praise Him. Let us fix our eyes upon the cradle of Bethlehem, and see what it reveals. It reveals the new birth of the world, the incarnation of God, with all its glorious consequences. It is a day more wonderful than that in which the earth arose out of chaos, "when the morning stars praised the Most High together, and the sons of God made a joyful melody." For on this day the sons of God were born, and light came into the darkness of our ruined world.

"The Word was made flesh." This truth is the foundation of our faith. He who was in the beginning with God, who was God, who created all things, became flesh. He took human nature of the substance of His mother, and united it to His divine person. Being from all eternity God, He could not cease to be God; but in time He was made perfect man. Two natures were united in the one person of the Son of God, with-

out any confusion or conversion. Each nature was intact, and their union was indivisible. Thus God became incarnate, and Jesus Christ was and is perfect God and perfect man. To understand properly this mystery, we must bear in mind the union of the two distinct natures, and the perfection of His manhood.

In His divine nature He subsisted as the second person in the blessed Trinity, being eternally begotten of the Father, and consubstantial with Him. His humanity was created in time, and formed by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary. From the conception these two natures were united indivisibly; and as the humanity had no personality except that of the Word, it became, as really as His divinity, the nature of God the Son; and Mary became in truth the mother of God. These two natures thus joined in one person, could never be separated, but will forever subsist without any confusion or change.

A confusion of two things results in a compound which is neither the one nor the other, but a mixture of both. In this supposition our Lord would have been neither God nor man; He would have lost of His complete divine charac-

ter in mingling with humanity. But we know that He possessed the attributes of God, and at the same time all the essential qualities of man. Neither of these could have belonged to Him, had the two natures been confused. Besides, the hypothesis is an impossibility. The divine essence is immutable, and cannot be commingled with any created thing. By confusing together the nature of Jesus Christ, the substance of the Word would be changed by being mixed with humanity, and lost in a compound nature. The glory of the unchangeable Trinity is impaired; the second Person is effectually taken away, and the Godhead, three in one, ceases to be. But no such mutation is possible to Him whose necessary being excludes all change. The hypothesis supposes God to be, and at the same time not to be. It supposes, also, the Son of God to be, and at the same time not to be the Son of God. For He is not the Son save as He is consubstantial with the Father; that is, as He is God. Yet He is not God, if He can suffer a change, or by mingling His divine essence with a created substance, lose the propriety of His sonship.

Neither in the incarnation could one nature be converted into the other, for this conversion

is an impossibility, while it would also destroy the end for which the Word was made flesh. The divine nature of Jesus Christ could not have been converted into the human, because, in His divine essence He is immutable, and here we should have not only a commingling, but a complete loss of the divinity. This is to say that He was never God. He is God, according to the supposition; He is not God, because as such he has ceased to be, and by such cessation of being has proved that He never was God. There is a plain contradiction in the very terms of the heretical statements. Can the Godhead cease to be? Can the Maker be made? Can the Creator be changed into a creature? Can one Person be taken from the Trinity and the other two remain? Where shall the Father be without His Son; or the Spirit without Him from whom He proceeds? Yet, there are those who tell us that, because the Word was made flesh, the Word, as such, ceased to be. The divine nature of the Son could not be converted into humanity without the destruction of God Himself. And here is another impossibility. This conversion could only take place through the agency of omnipotence, and hence there

would be a God to work this conversion ; and no God, because the change would destroy God. The end of the incarnation requires a true and proper humanity, in which the Lamb of God might be the victim for our sins, might suffer and die, and become the life of the world. But if it be not the humanity of God, the sacrifice can have no efficacy of redemption, it is still a human oblation, and Calvary falls short of an infinite propitiation, and the world has no Redeemer.

The conversion of the human nature of Christ into His divine, involves equal contradictions. His humanity had no existence till the conception, when He was made flesh. The two natures must have been distinct at first ; and if so, when did the conversion take place ? There is no pretence of any time or manner. Did He take flesh only to swallow it up in the divinity ? For what purpose then was He conceived, and born of the Virgin, since according to the supposition He was the same before and after ? Facts, of which men are competent witnesses, prove the existence of His humanity. Did He not live on earth three and thirty years, with all the affections of man ? Did He not die on the cross in

the face of the world? Was not His humanity His sacrifice? "Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast fitted to me."* The divine essence cannot receive any thing into itself, since in so doing it would suffer mutation. It cannot receive any thing superior to itself, for there is no such thing: it cannot receive an inferior, for then it would lose its perfection, and God would cease to be God. Such insuperable difficulties meet the denial of the Catholic doctrine of the incarnation. That the Word may be made flesh, there must be a true and proper humanity, and a true and proper divinity; and these two natures must be united in one person. Without the unity of person, there could be no unity of the natures; and the personality must be the personality of God the Son, else we could not say that the "Word was made flesh," or that Jesus Christ is God. "He is God, of the substance of His Father, begotten before all ages; and man, of the substance of His mother, born in the world. Perfect God, and perfect man, of a reasonable soul, and human flesh, subsisting. And although He be God and man, He is not two, but one Christ: one, not by the conversion

* Hebrews, x. 5.

of the divinity into flesh, but by the assumption of humanity into God ; one, not by the confusion of substance, but by the unity of person. For as the rational soul and the flesh are one man, so God and man are one Christ." So S. Cyril says : " His two natures have knit themselves the one, to the other, and in that nearness are as incapable of confusion as of distraction. Their coherence has not taken away the difference between them. Flesh hath not become God, but doth still continue flesh, although it be now the flesh of God."

The end of the incarnation requires that our Lord should be perfect man, since in our nature He made the atonement. We are this day praising God for His birth into our world of sin, and the verity of His humanity depends upon the truth of His nativity. He came among us in all the weakness of infancy, having assumed all the necessary infirmities of our nature ; and the reality of His manhood is just as essential to His mediatorial office as His divinity. Humanity consists of the union of human flesh with an intelligent soul, and hence at His conception in the womb of the blessed Virgin, He assumed both body and soul. A body was fitted to Him

formed of the pure substance of His immaculate mother, and was united to a soul created by God. Every reality of human flesh was found in Him. He was conceived and born, He was nourished and grew in stature; and the God head, at His will, manifested itself more and more through His growing body. He felt all the innocent infirmities which encompass us; He was like us in every thing but sin. He grew to the perfect stature of manhood, and then He suffered in the flesh, and stretched out His arms to the beams of the cross. He died and was buried, and rose again on the third day. He, like all other men, is a subject of history, which records His deeds and suffering. He was seen by mortal eyes, and handled by mortal hands. He is as truly Mary's child, as we are the children of our parents. "Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; and every spirit that dissolveth Jesus, is not of God."*

Every fact of His life testifies to the verity of His humanity, from the mystery of Bethlehem to the glory of the ascension. Without a true body, He could not have been incarnate: there

* 1 John, iv. 2.

would have been no Christ, no Church, and no Christianity. The Church is His body, because all her children are united to His flesh, through which they receive divine life. The holy Eucharist is the sacrifice of His body and blood ; the great act of worship without which we should have no way of drawing nigh unto heaven. It is the food of the regenerate ; the source of life to those who are dead in the sin of the first Adam. If the humanity of Christ were not real, there would be no offering of His body, no real nourishment for the soul, and no promise of a glorious resurrection.

A true human soul is essential to humanity, and hence our Lord, as other men, has such a soul. The divinity of God the Word did not and could not supply its place. The divine will was distinct from His human will, although the latter was ever in subserviency to God. This holy soul, united at the instant of His conception to the body, was ever in the enjoyment of the beatific vision, and always partook of the infinite knowledge. There was no growth in wisdom for an intelligence unbounded ; but as day after day the flesh grew in stature, the manifestations of Deity were more and more appar-

ent. To understand properly the incarnation, we must clearly perceive this truth, since without a reasonable soul not one action of humanity could be attributed to Him. The emotions of grief, sympathy, and compassion belonged to Him in the highest degree. He felt all our miseries, and our ingratitude broke His heart. He was a true and faithful son to His most blessed mother, discharging every requirement of filial affection, and being a pattern to us in all the relations of life. Hear His own words: "Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." "My soul is sorrowful, even to death." "Into Thy hands, O Father, I commend my spirit." And indeed the propriety of His death depends upon the verity of His soul, since death consists in the separation of body and soul. The sorrows of the cross, as far as man could witness them, are matters of history. His life became extinct by the cruelty of His murderers; His soul by violence was parted from the body, and went upon its mission to the spirits in prison. Every fact of the Gospel attests the perfection of the humanity which He took for our redemption. He endured all the common wants of life, suffered hunger and thirst, weariness and pain;

while the deepest fountains of human feeling were opened in His heart. Love and compassion gushed forth in tears, and sorrow and a sense of ingratitude found vent only in a sweat of blood.

Such is a simple statement of the mystery of the incarnation. We are Christians only as we believe these truths, and improve them by an active faith. Jesus Christ—God and man—is the founder and preserver of Christianity. His sacred person, while it sustains the life of all whom He redeems, is also the object of the adversary's enmity. All heresies, directly or indirectly, attack Him who is the beginning and end of all faith. Some have denied His divine character, against the testimony of the Church; even against the evidence of His miracles. Others have assailed the attributes of His humanity, and with equal injury to religion, have represented His manhood as a mere deception. It matters not how the spirit of unbelief approaches, its poisoned arrows are always aimed at the breast of the Word made flesh. And we to refute every word of calumny, and silence every objection to our holy religion, have recourse to Him who gave us life

from His bosom, and quickened us by His sacred flesh. Christianity finds its fulness in Him. We lead the unbeliever to the manger of Bethlehem, and kneeling there, tell him that the little child which lies so helpless in Mary's arms, is the God who created the universe, the only light of his intellect, the only rest of his heart. If he will not accept this infant for his Lord, he must walk in darkness, and go to the grave without hope. If he will not love this babe of the Virgin, he shall never find one on whom his noblest affections can be spent. Life must be to him a page whose letters he cannot read ; the world, with its changes, a problem he cannot solve. He may reason himself into confidence in his own powers, but there is darkness in the mind and vacancy in the heart. The ruins of the fall are all around him : he himself is one of them ; but he knows nothing of the restoration. Taken in the spoils of the first Adam doomed to death, he refuses the Deliverer who alone can rescue him, who can make the scales to fall from his eyes, who can break the chains which bind his intellect, and set free his heart to love the only good. He may, like the madman, dash himself against the bars of his cage,

but the strong iron yields not, and he is a prisoner forever. Bethlehem alone, and the mystery we celebrate to-day, can deliver the captive, guide through the labyrinth of sin original and actual, and lead the soul home to its God. All meek and gentle in the arms of His mother, is the King of all hearts, in whom are revealed the truth and the beauty of the Almighty. Does this great humility shock us? God's ways are not like ours. Doth not this little Child know all our thoughts? Is He not the maker of our spirits? Can we boast of our knowledge in His presence? For what were our hearts made? For the creature? Let the bitter experience of the unbeliever answer. He has walked through dry places seeking rest, and he has found none. Earth is all garnished with the beauties which the divine pencil has traced on every work of creation. He has no eye to see them. He himself is a masterpiece of his Maker's wisdom, a rebuke to his own slowness of faith. He can only read the praises of his activity : can only gather the food of his own pride.

At the cradle of the incarnate God, high and low meet together ; the man of science, and the

unlettered peasant. He is the only Redeemer of all. To Him we have come on this day, with the tribute of praise and gratitude. His birth is the rising of a sun which shall never set. Its light revives the dead, brings forth fruit from the barren earth, and sends joy into the desolate heart of man.

We will kneel before the manger, which rebukes the pride of earthly greatness, till the little child shall touch us with His almighty hands, and fashion our lost humanity after His own image. He shall one day come again, and we shall then be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

SERMON VI.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE CREATURE TO GOD.

“Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just.”—S. MATTHEW, xx. 4.

For Septuagesima Sunday.

TO-DAY there is a change in the services of the Church. From the uninterrupted festivity of our Lord's nativity, we are gradually to pass to a season of humiliation. We are to follow Christ in His fasting, to accompany Him through His sufferings and death. A season of preparation is therefore interposed, and our hearts are to be gradually disposed to receive the full benefit of the holy fast of Lent. To-day the alleluias of the divine office are suspended, the priests at the altar are clothed in purple, for the child who was born at Bethlehem was born to suffer and die, and the sorrows of His atonement are about to begin.

As we seek for salvation, let us give heed to the warnings which the Church sounds in our ears, and prepare ourselves to follow Christ where His grace shall lead us. There are many lessons contained in the office of this Sunday. The epistle reminds us that we have started upon the heavenly race, and that while many run for the prize, there are few who persevere to reach the goal. If an earthly crown demands self-denial and discipline, much more does the incorruptible wreath of the just. If S. Paul chastised his body, and kept it in subjection by penance, lest after all his labors he should become a reprobate, what care and zeal do we need who are so far behind this great apostle! May we not well fear that pride and love of ease may blind our eyes to the dangers which threaten our overthrow? Is it not wise to look to the ground on which we stand, and to closely examine our condition before God?

The gospel represents our Lord in the character of a husbandman who goes out in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard, who at evening gives to every one his due. In this parable we may see many traits of the patience and wisdom of the great Lover of souls, whose

only desire is to reward faithfully those who toil for Him. But amid all His mercy we have abundant proof of His justice, since even the recompense He is so anxious to give must be deserved. We, who desire salvation, must go into His vineyard, for there is no other place where labor can earn an eternal reward. Toiling, elsewhere, we only work for the present life; and yet, at the end of our day of grace, when the account shall be settled, we shall receive only that which is just.—I desire, then, to improve this thought on this day, and to impress upon your minds the great truth that we are directly accountable to God for all we do. Let us see the meaning of our Saviour's words, and meditate upon the justice, which, with omniscient scrutiny and omnipotent power, surrounds every soul of man. We can no more escape from it than we can cease to be, or go back to the nothing from which the creating hand of God drew us; and we shall see abundant reason to pray that the divine grace may succor our frailty, and deliver us from the punishments which by our sins we have incurred.

I. It is quite easy to understand the doctrine of our accountability to our Creator. It simply

asserts that we must answer to God for every human action; that all our thoughts, words, and deeds, are amenable to His justice. Whatever we do, which has the free consent of our will, has a character of merit or demerit; for though in the abstract we may consider some acts as indifferent, yet, in the individual, every deliberate volition proceeds from some intention, which renders it good or bad in God's sight. If it be good, it shall receive a reward proportionate to its deserts; if bad, it must bring punishment, from which there is no natural escape. All our actions then have this immense value before God. In the state of nature there can be only a natural merit, because man alone can only work in his own order. He cannot elevate himself above the plane of his nature; but as the obligations of the natural law bind him, he can transgress those obligations, and so render himself amenable to punishment without end. In the state of grace to which we are raised by baptism, we receive the power to co-operate with God in the supernatural order, and so to merit eternal life. And we must answer to discriminating justice for every gift we have obtained from the divine bounty; for temporal

benefits as well as for spiritual blessings. Each soul has his own especial probation, his own account, and his own reward or punishment. Into this solitude of his responsibility no creature can enter, for whatever may be the influences moving him to action, the will always remains its own master. Others may entice him to sin: he is answerable for his sin. Others may lead him to virtue: he will gain the reward for his own act, as God sees it to be good. And to this fearful view of man's accountability we must add, that he is judged by his Creator, who can by no possibility overlook or forget a thought, or a word, or a deed. All things are present to His vision, and darkness is no darkness to Him, but midnight is as clear as noonday. We will consider for a moment what light reason and faith throw upon this truth, and then beg of our Lord to impress its lessons upon our hearts.

II. Reason alone will demonstrate the necessity of this doctrine, it being once admitted that we are the creatures of God. The Creator has a sovereign right to the thing He creates; and when from nothing He brings an intelligent agent, that agent owes to Him every fac-

ulty, and the use of every endowment. The thing created witnesses to the Creator, and sufficiently proves His power. The finite does not exist without the infinite: the thing contingent proves that there is independent being; and even possibility leads us to conclude that there is *One*, who *is* by an absolute necessity, who contains in Himself the reason of His own existence. The will of the Creator is necessarily the law of His creation, and hence God is, by virtue of His own perfections, a moral governor. Law, without the sanction of reward and punishment, is ineffectual; and facts, against which there can be no argument, demonstrate to us how surely the hand of retribution falls upon the offender. Sins are punished sooner or later, as the first glance at every human society shows, as the least acquaintance with any human soul will prove. And, if in this life the judgment be not complete, if punishment be unequally meted out, it is only because there is another world where the divine justice shall be vindicated, where every one shall receive his due. Such are ever the conclusions of upright reason; and there is no man, in his sober senses, who can deny his accountability to God. If in

words he deny it, he only makes a vain effort to cover his real convictions by the boldness of his assertions. His conscience bears witness to the truth of the thing he refuses to acknowledge. He feels shame and remorse when sin is committed, he trembles at the thought of death and the life to come. Why does he quiver under the stings of remorse, if he has no sense of right and wrong? Why does he tremble at the consequences of vice, if there be no avenger, if there be no judge to whom he must answer? Human tribunals he may evade; but he cannot run from the eyes of his Creator. Let him sin in the dark, where no human vision can penetrate, and he will still fear; for he knows that no witness is needed before the tribunal of an all-knowing God. He may try to ease his conscience by specious arguments, but it is of no avail where reason sees and trembles. He cannot be deaf to the voice which almost persecutes him, or blind to the hand which pours bitterness into every cup of pleasure. He cannot run from himself, or shake off the burden his free will has put on his shoulders. When we speak of God's judgment, we appeal to the heart of man; and when we speak of the day of

wrath, we speak of terrors which appall every soul of our fallen race.

III. Revelation will only place in still stronger light the truth of our responsibility to God. On the threshold of the Christian dispensation we are met with the startling announcement that God will judge every secret thought; that He has appointed a day when the world shall be gathered before His tribunal, when every one shall give a strict account of the deeds done in the body. The Founder of the way of salvation shall return, not in the meekness and poverty of His first advent, but in terrible majesty to hear the final accusation and to give the eternal sentence. On His right and left shall be ranged the just and the unjust, and He will then give to all their due. This will be the evening of the long day of grace, when all who have labored in the vineyard shall receive their wages, from the first hour of the patriarchs down to the eleventh hour of the Catholic Church. The hour of death closes for each man the time of probation, and ushers the soul into the presence of the Judge, where every secret is made manifest, and the everlasting condition settled. So far faith only illumines what reason

and conscience teach, and gives the seal of the divine word to the analogies of nature. We are taught by the Church to live in view of death and judgment, to prepare ourselves against the day of wrath, by frequent self-examination, and by humble accusation of ourselves in the sacrament of penance, where the mercy of Jesus meets the returning sinner. The whole system of moral training goes upon this principle; and no pains are spared to impress upon the young their responsibility to God, to teach the child, from his earliest years, that the all-seeing eye is upon him. This is the secret of self-discipline in every walk of the spiritual life, and the constant incitement to vigilance and self-abnegation. Without it we can accomplish nothing in the sanctification of souls; and it is the wisdom of our divine religion which brings our accountability so steadily before our eyes.

Besides, by baptism we cease to be simply the children of the fallen Adam; we become the children of the second Adam. Being regenerate by the power of the Holy Ghost, we enter upon a life full of new responsibilities, whose end is union with Christ here, and glory hereafter. The grace of the second birth

through all human vicissitudes leads to nothing less than the vision of God. The greatness of our gifts increases the magnitude of our account; sin gathers a more heinous ingratitude, and virtue puts on a loftier merit. By obedience to the Holy Spirit, who is within us, we merit eternal life; and, by transgression, we are deserving of a more rigorous punishment. Every mortal sin committed since our new birth has made us slaves of the devil, and condemned us to the fires which were kindled for him. It has also rendered us amenable to a temporal penalty, from which there can be no escape, except by patient suffering and good works. Every lesser sin, too, has its penalty; and we have not deviated from the law of God in our regard, without exposing ourselves to pain in this life and in the next. Witness, in proof of these truths, the sufferings which God sends on the just, and see how carefully and even severely He scourges them for light faults. Behold how the saints have mortified themselves by chains and cords, in dens and caves of the earth. This was not only to put themselves in union with their crucified Lord; it was also to expiate their infidelities, and utterly subdue the rebellious flesh.

Examine carefully the course of providence, and even ask the testimony of your own experience. Has not sin surely brought suffering in its train? Has not, perhaps, a long course of misfortune followed the great faults of your life?

Then, when the fever of human passion is stilled in the grave, faith reveals to us how the divine retribution works purification in the soul, or brings from the rebellious creature the vindication of infinite justice. Purgatory with its fires opens upon the imperfect Christian, who must be kept from God, for whom he longs, and descend into the flame which can burn out what is vile, and by its agony pay the debt which remains against the sinner. There, in that purifying furnace, God's sanctity will gain glory, and every infidelity, however slight, be brought to account. Surely, we only need to look upon this picture, which revelation spreads before us, to be convinced of the awfulness of our accountability to our Creator. Nor need we scan more closely the working of God's vengeance in that hell which He has prepared for the ungodly. There is an eternity of torment from which every ray of grace is abstracted, where no light burns save the ever-devouring fire; a realm

where the names of Jesus and Mary have no power to save. This is the fate of the creature, who, to the last, refused obedience; who would not accept salvation through the cross; who, in the end, falls into the strong arms of his Maker, from which there is no escape. We feel, in our inmost hearts, that this is just, and that God would have left his justice unrequited, had He not made ready this prison for the persevering rebel. But, alas, what an end of human probation! What a destiny for the creature made in the divine image, who might have found a home in the new Jerusalem, with God, a fellow-citizen of the angels and saints! Behold how the intelligent agent must choose between heaven, and hell; between beatitude, where peace flows as a river, and endless woe. To one of these ends our probation must bring us; for there is no middle state where we can pass our eternity. If we will not glorify our Maker in the rewards of the just, we must give Him praise amid the scourges of a justice which is worthy of God.

IV. What then, dear brethren, shall be our good resolutions in view of this great lesson? We must soon be judged, in a few days, or

hours, or months. Death, which decides our eternal state, is hurrrying towards us; and we may, even now, be feeling the first arrows from his quiver. Every moment we live is precious, because it tells on the future life, because it adds to our reward, or increases our debt of punishment. Every hour we are sowing for the great harvest, and as we sow, we shall reap. If we "sow in the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption; but if we sow in the spirit, we shall reap life everlasting." We live on thoughtlessly, and perhaps little realizing the immense worth of time; and soon it will be too late for any remedy. Many go on in sin, daily rendering themselves obnoxious to the undying fire. Many, who would not fall into mortal sin are, by carelessness, losing the fruit of all their good works, and disposing themselves towards separation from God. When we least expect it, the hour of judgment will come, and then there will be no time to make ready. The present moment is all we can be sure of, and that is often worth an eternity. When the evening overtakes us, there is no place for work, and no chance for reparation. Let us then make it our constant desire to live with the consciousness

that the all-seeing eye of God is upon us. How could we bear the scrutiny of One from whom no secret thoughts can be hid? Is there any one day by which we are willing to settle our eternal destiny? Let us take our most sacred hours, and see how far short of perfection we fall. And, if we would not be judged by even our best moments, how shall we appear when our whole lives are brought in view, when the accumulated burden of many years comes before the throne of God? It is, surely, enough to make the most careful tremble, thus to contemplate the consequences of a truth which all know, but which few lay to heart.—What shall we do to prepare ourselves for the great account? is the question which ought to go up from every heart. The past, with its dread responsibilities is gone. We cannot undo it; but the present is here, and on it, no matter what may be our state, depends our eternity.

The Master of the vineyard is waiting for us. It may be high noon, or the eleventh hour of life with us. He bids us go work for him, and when the evening shall come, He will give us what is just. If we have wasted time, let us now improve it; let us address ourselves to the

need of our souls, open our wounds to the great Physician; and seek, in ways of humiliation, the purification we require. As there is much to be done, so with energy we must toil, and leave no opportunity of grace unemployed. Many run in the race, but few obtain the prize. Many work, but few labor for Christ. Whatever, then, our hands find to do, let us do it with all our might, lest the shadows of the grave overtake us before our task is done.

SERMON VII.

THE LAW OF GROWTH.

“To every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound; but from him that hath not, that also which he seemeth to have shall be taken away.”—S. MATT., xxv. 29.

For Sexagesima Sunday.

THESE remarkable words of our Lord declare one great principle of His kingdom; a principle which lies at the foundation of all moral and spiritual life. It is a startling truth, full of the most momentous consequences to each one of us, and upon which we ought often to reflect. In our way from earth to the glory of heaven, our Lord Jesus Christ is our guide, the beginning and ending of all we do. We tread in His steps, we walk by His strength; His own gracious work in us is the cause of our reward, and He will crown His own gifts in us, if so be we are found in Him at the last great day. He is the husbandman from whose bands fall

the seeds of the divine word. He planteth in our hearts the precious seed, and giveth it power to germinate; and when in our souls the fruits of grace come forth, it is because the Lord of life works in His own garden. Without Him we are nothing, having not the power to think even a good thought for eternity.

Yet, every step we take towards heaven, must be freely taken by ourselves. God will not accept an unwilling obedience, or compel the will of any of His creatures. It is true, then, that upon ourselves depends all progress towards heaven, and all growth in holiness. Fast as we will we may go on towards truth, and holiness, and peace. All, indeed, have not the same talents. To one is given five; to another, two; and to another, one. But God shall judge us according to our gifts, holding us responsible for just what He has intrusted to our care. Greater, then, according to our greater privileges, is our responsibility to Him; but, for each and every one of us it is true, that "he that hath, to him shall be given, and he shall abound; but from him that hath not, shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." Thus, it is, that upon *us* Almighty God sus-

pende the question of our salvation, and after all His amazing mercy, and the constant solicitations of His Spirit, leaves us to choose or refuse eternal life. For each one who will be saved, must *choose* to come unto Christ, in the strength of Him who calls him; and to the end he must freely co-operate with God. Thus, by our will consenting unto God, and co-operating with Him, the finite is joined unto the Infinite, the weak unto the Omnipotent, and Almighty God rules, works, and is glorified *in us*.

And so shall it be at the end, when, through abounding grace, the struggle is safely over. The increase of God's gifts is only through our co-operation with Him, by those good works which God rewards with increase of grace here, and everlasting glory hereafter. A faithful use of what we have, certainly and unerringly brings down more; and, as grace increases, our good works increase, and we so attain that portion in bliss which is the reward of obedience. Growth in holiness is the reward of faithfulness; and when the Lord Almighty crowns His saints, He does it, not because He for them has been obedient unto death, but because they *in Him* have wrought righteousness, and have been

obedient like Him. The gift of God "is in us, a fountain of water springing up unto everlasting life;" a treasure, growing by our use of it; a deep, which, as we sound it, hath no end, but is measureless as God's love. He that hath, because he keeps and improves what God gives him, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance. He that hath not, because by negligence he has lost what was given him, from him shall be taken every thing which he seemeth to have, and the wicked and slothful servant shall be cast into exterior darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. There are but two courses for men to pursue, to improve what God has given them, and now and ever to receive of the overflowing abundance of Christ; or, to lose all that is theirs, and to be themselves *lost*, plunged deeper into perdition, according as God has multiplied His mercies to their souls!—Such is the fearful lesson of these words of our Saviour; which unfold the high estate of His children, and the fearful danger of such as presume upon His mercy, and trifle with His grace. To apply this lesson to ourselves, let us remember that we can never be as those who have not heard

the word of God, or know nothing of His will. We cannot change our condition or our lot in life, so as to have less responsibility than what has been made ours by the providence of God. We must stand or fall where He has placed us; standing or falling according to our own wills. For all the grace, all the knowledge, all the light which He has given us, we must answer at the tribunal of His justice. It were vain, it were worse than useless, to compare ourselves with others, or by others to measure our standard of duty. In our secret souls we know what His work has been: how He has led us; how He has showed us of His truth; where He now leads us; and what is the duty He now requires at our hands. And again; we know, or we may know, how we have neglected grace, turned deaf ears to God's secret calls, slighted opportunities of good, and grieved the Holy Spirit of God. Privileges may have been ours which, in the day of health and peace, we did not value, which now are forever gone from us. They would have carried us nearer to God, but by them we were unwilling to ascend to the Father of spirits. Our souls have been earth-bound in the midst of all God's mercies, unwilling to rise

where our Maker and Redeemer would guide us. For such memories of slighted opportunities and wasted grace, there is found relief only in the works and acts of penitence to which the Church will soon call us. But it will be blessed if they teach us, for the time to come, an earnest and faithful use of all the means of life which are so freely opened for us. What are we, my brethren, that God Almighty should so regard us; that in our secret chambers, or among His people, He should condescend to visit us? And what are we, that we should venture to despise His long-suffering, and pour contempt upon His condescension, as though He had need of us, as though such mercies would last forever? We forget who it is with whom we are dealing, when turning from the way He bids us walk in, we seek in other ways not *Him* but *self*, and would fain approach His throne upon other terms than He has blessed. He who would be safe, must bow down himself to God's holy ways, and with fear and gratitude follow every intimation of His will. Blessing and peace, and the unclouded vision of God, can be ours in no other way.

Seek we then, beloved, to be faithful to God,

hearing, obeying, improving every call ; and, in view of that day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, and no vain dissembling shall abide His presence. God's secret visitations, wherein He doth direct, strengthen, support, and comfort us—these are really known only to those who are faithful, to those who are set on heavenly things. Above all things, precious are these inward communions with the God of our spirits. They teach us how in the hollow of His hand He holdeth our souls ; how all our life floweth from the pierced heart of Jesus ; how God is in us of a truth, the life of our life, the power, wisdom, goodness, truth, of all His children. We hear the gracious voice, " This is the way, walk ye in it ;" and, day by day, we are borne along by Him who in us retraces His own blood-stained steps to glory. Cherish, then, and seek by prayer, these secret calls of God ; and when, in the silence of your hearts, you hear the voice of your Redeemer, bow down and *obey*. Disappoint not Him who knocks at your door, and points to that hard and thorny path which He hath trod. He knoweth your wants, and longeth to supply your need, and your souls shall famish if you do not follow Him.

Wait for His voice, and when you hear wait no longer. *His* voice it is, which bids you give up this pleasure; weep over this sin; take up this cross; draw nigh to Him; forsake the world.

Oh, shut not your ears to *one* of His sacred calls. Your eternal life may hang upon it. Do not do as many do, as Satan tempts us all to do;—do not follow only that which is right in your own eyes, and cut out of religion all that is severe; all that subdues the flesh; all that really turns your affections unto God. If you have really turned unto the Lord, you will find first one duty and then another, and day by day you will be going on, doing the duties of each day, and growing on in holiness as your Lord shall give you strength. Beware of self-will, of choosing any path but that which God marks out for you. Let your obedience be whole and entire, giving up in every point your own will; and you shall go on to heights of grace and strength beyond even your feeble hopes. For more even than we desire, does the Lord give to those who truly seek Him. Oh, that we knew more of that passive, unreasoning obedience which follows God's holy will: hath but one voice, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant

heareth;" and hath but one word, the faithful word of Him who calleth, justifieth, glorifieth. This is the service of angels, who are filled with His glory, "who are mighty in strength, who execute His word and hearken unto the voice of His commandments." Such must be the temper of all who shall at the last be accepted in Christ, who must be really *one* with God. As far as we set up self, or selfish judgments, or private fancies above the holy will of God, so far we worship self, and not God; so far we close the channels of grace and separate ourselves from the Lord, who alone has eternal life. Thus we lose our confidence in Christ, who speaketh only to the open ear, and our souls are bereft of that celestial harmony which filleth heaven, whose echoes are only known to the true and pure in heart.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is not only a Saviour but a Lawgiver, and He not only asks obedience to His inward calls, but to His external law and plain objective system; and never do His inward inspirations infringe the plan of salvation which He has ordained. He calleth all by His gospel, by the means of life established in His Church; and faithfulness to Him in these,

is the very spirit which He desires, which by them He produces in us. Thus His system of sacraments hath the power to nourish faith, to make obedience real, to make religion not a figure, not a thought, not an idea; but a living truth. Beware, beloved, how you undervalue these gifts of God, or seek salvation independently of *them*, by your own faith, or hope, or experience. If the religion of Christ is any thing, they are His own means of life; if He has established any thing, He has established *them*. He did not come, as on Sinai, in fire and cloud, to reveal His law; but He came in our flesh, to make us one body with Him, to animate us with one will, to baptize us with fire, even the Holy Ghost, whose temples He has made us. His law is written with the finger of God upon our hearts, delivered by the fathers, declared by the one unchanging voice of His Church, which is the voice of God, for God hath no other voice upon earth.

Oh, in holy sacraments Christ comes; and when men reject these, Christ Himself is rejected; when His children look away from these, they look away from Christ.

Who would have an unreal religion,—a re-

ligion made up of notions never realized in the life, of dogmas which the heart may never rest upon,—a religion which has not power to possess the whole man, and subdue him wholly under the bleeding cross of his Redeemer. Who that sinks down in his own weakness, does not look unto Christ, does not ask to be *led*, does not wish to be conformed unto Christ, to be really changed into the image of his Lord, “to be holy even as He is holy,” “to know even as *he* is known?” For the faithful and true who seek Him with their whole hearts, more than this is reserved. They shall be fruitful in the garden of God, they shall bring forth a hundred-fold even in this life. The good Shepherd shall guide them by His rod and staff, and lead them by the banks of living waters; the sunlight of truth shall illuminate them, and they shall abound with every good. “Mercy shall follow them all their days, and they shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

SERMON VIII.

SUBMISSION THE WAY TO KNOWLEDGE.

“With the hearing of the ear I have heard Thee, but now mine eye seeth Thee ; therefore I reprehend myself, and do penance in dust and ashes.”—JOB, xlii. 5, 6.

THERE is nothing in which Christians fail more than in obtaining a proper knowledge of God ; and yet this knowledge lies at the very foundation of true religion. It is not, indeed, possible that any mortal should comprehend God ; but it is of the highest importance that our ideas of Him should be in accordance with His character and attributes. Many are forgetful of His infinite perfections, and fixing their thoughts upon only one of His attributes, gain no conception of the manifold beauty and harmony of His works. With these partial views of God, He who is above all is measured by the feeble reason of the creature, and limits are set to the glories of the Almighty.

In our fallen state we cannot see our Maker as He is ; for our minds are carnal, and we

cannot endure the nearness of his consuming fire. Our hearts must first be purified, and our senses prepared for that vision which forms the bliss of heaven. We know not what was the lot of sinless man, or what would have been his portion had he remained obedient in Paradise. Whatever was the communion of the unsullied creature, it is not possible for us to know God, except through a religion which first renews and transforms our natures; and it is from this religion, divinely given us, that we are to form any just ideas of Him who made us. And the first step towards this knowledge is the submission of ourselves in *faith*;—faith in God; faith in His Church; faith in the mysteries He has taught His people. Then do we enter into the secrets of that vast power which, all unseen by the world, moulds human hearts, restrains selfish wills, works upon the springs of social life, changes the face of the world. It is the power of “The Word made flesh.” The power of the Triune God, in the mystical temple of the Son. For truly to know God is eternal life, is communing with Him in and through Jesus Christ, till we lose our own wills, and are lost in Him who of many members hath made one

body. When the soul, by the faithful use of grace, has reached this point in the divine life, then does she bow down before the God of all, and with the view of His almighty power and infinite beauty there comes the crushing sense of unworthiness; and in deep abasement is she consecrated to live no more her own life, but to be as the spirits around the throne, with veiled face and swift wings, every thought of self cast out, and ever filled with love of Him in whose favor is life.

This is the end of that divine religion by which we know God.

But many begin in a different way, and, forming most imperfect but earnest views of God, are led on by the deep spiritual wants of their nature, till one truth after another opens upon them, and they are brought to the feet of Jesus Christ to find rest to their souls. Yet any experience of grace only shows the fulness and perfection of that one plan of salvation which infinite goodness has devised.

If thus it be true that we are only to know God through the one religion which He has given us, then, according as men depart from this religion, must we expect to see the most

unworthy and erroneous views of Him who made us.

And they who have erred in their conceptions of God, err still more in their knowledge of themselves. For all our relations to Him must appear in their just proportion ere we can see what we are, and how we stand in His sight. By His greatness, do we measure our nothingness; by His power, we know our feebleness; by His goodness, we estimate our ingratitude; and, by His infinite purity, we learn the vileness and guilt of sin. And in His way of salvation "mercy and truth are met, justice and peace have kissed each other." Mercy and justice, speaking from the bleeding cross of His Son, declare our utter ruin, and His complete redemption. For, redemption, even more than creation, makes known the fulness of His perfections, which are summed up in the one attribute, *love*. Redemption brings the Almighty near to us, exalting us to heavenly places; and yet humbling the soul as it enters the dazzling light, and is filled with God. Such knowledge begets faith, humility, and longing desire; the fruits of that profound submission which alone becometh creatures before their Creator, re-

deemed sinners before their Saviour. "I have heard of Thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I reprehend myself, and do penance in dust and ashes."

We can have knowledge of God only by the submission of our whole selves, our souls and bodies.

Let us see how experience illustrates this truth. The carnal mind receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned. Men who live without God serve only themselves and the enemy who hath blinded their minds. Resisting every call which leads from sensual things, they lay up their treasures here, and self-will is their ruler. Neither the mercy nor the justice of God move them to repentance; and, as they are unwilling here to submit themselves, so must they hereafter be subdued beneath the power of His vengeance. Yet how unreal is their life! Slaves of sense and victims of appetite, unmindful of their eternal destiny, they pass into the presence of God, who is "a consuming fire;" for we must choose between the loving submission springing from the knowledge and communion of God, or the everlasting subjection under the rod of

His wrath. For, surely, in heaven and upon earth the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

And people, professing the religion of Christ, are often in many respects like the men of the world. They have known their Creator only by the hearing of the ear, for inwardly they are not subdued unto His law. Whatever their outward professions are, the seat of life within is full of pride, unbelief, and worldliness. They judge and review the ways of Providence. They set bounds to faith, and fix their own terms of salvation. The reason is proud, seeking to measure spiritual things by its own power; and the will is proud, even when submission would prove the conviction of the understanding. So reasoners are beguiled of the purest reason, which is simple obedience to God; and religion is robbed of that very reverence and faith which can alone bring us near to the presence of the Almighty. The undisciplined mind is utterly unable to see the heavenly mysteries; and thus our whole moral training is subverted, when we lose sight of the appointed way of life. Oh, how do all such shut out from their view the light and blessedness of the world to come, the comfort and peace of the presence of Jesus

Christ! How unreal is their religion, divesting the spiritual life of its mysteries, and neglecting to bow down the reason to the greatest of all mysteries—the mystery of “*the Word made flesh.*”

But, perhaps, most destructive of all our errors, is the common error concerning sin, and God’s dealings with sinners. The certainty of strict and unalterable justice is not realized; and while low views are entertained of the work of grace in man, still looser are the notions of sin and its consequences. Even reason teaches us, from the analogy of God’s providence, how surely and certainly sin is punished, when sorrow and misery follow on the steps of guilt, and the seeds of disease and the inheritance of shame descend from generation to generation. Yet, who that has ever looked at the fearful sight of Calvary, needs to be convinced of the awful danger of sin! And it were now a contempt of that Saviour’s cross, a crucifying him afresh, to suppose that God will not visit for transgression, that any sin shall go unpunished which has not sought and found the virtue of His quickening blood. Yea, *now* our sins defile the members of Christ; they pollute

the temple of His Spirit; they reproach the worthy name by which we are called. How strict then must our lives be—how active our vigilance—how thorough our penitence, lest we suffer in the world to come for sins we mourned not here! What need have we not for pardon! How are we lost, if Jesus stretch not forth the hand to rule the storm, or guide us through the wilderness! There have been many, my brethren, who, going smoothly on in ways that seemed right, have not felt the need of penitence and the restraint of its discipline. They have been prospered in worldly things, and they have looked forward without fear to eternity. They had heard of God by the hearing of the ear, and they had spoken of His infinite mercy; and yet the time came in which all this was changed. The voice of the Lord called unto them, and they *awoke*—awoke as from a dream, to see the yawning gulf beneath them, and the hand's-breadth between them and death. Then did the soul turn in upon itself, to see the dangerous path in which it had strayed, and to thread the labyrinth of sin. The conscience had slumbered as in death; while sin took its secret course, and pride, unsubdued, put

down remorse and shame. Now, act after act, and words long forgotten, and thoughts indulged, came hurrying to the reckoning of the self-accusing soul, and the sinner spake out: "Alas, never have I repented before! I have not known the awfulness of sin; I have had no knowledge of a just and holy God! 'I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I reprehend myself, and do penance in dust and ashes.'"

God grant, my brethren, that this time of awakening come not too late to any of us who sleep, not knowing our danger, or the means which God has given for victory over the power of sin; and when, in God's mercy, we learn the real nature of sin, and how it changes our relations to Him, then shall we seek in earnest the healing of the cross, the wondrous remedy which for our peace He hath blessed. Then, with a sense of our need, shall we submit ourselves, soul and body, to the appointed way of life; and reason will only see more and more of the infinite beauty of God's works, while the will shall only seek to be *one* with His, and to adore and follow the wisdom with

which He ruleth in the armies of heaven, and doeth according to His pleasure among the inhabitants of earth.

O beloved, let us remember that we are dust and ashes; and let us pray to the almighty Saviour to subdue in us the pride, which in its least beginning is rebellion against Him, who is goodness, truth, and wisdom, that so we may know His will, and be taught the peace of His chosen: "Ask in faith, nothing wavering." For ere long the day of visitation shall come. The Lord shall blow with His wind, and the strong oak shall be torn away, and the high mountain shall be removed: "The loftiness of men shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be humbled; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day;" "Cease ye therefore from the man whose breath is in His nostrils;" "Enter thou into the rock, and hide thee in the pit, from the face of the fear of the Lord, and from the glory of His majesty."

Let man cease to reason, and learn to adore. We, who of ourselves are nothing, can in Him do all things. If any one really seeketh the light of God, let him renew his repentance, and cling to the feet of Jesus, where sinners find

peace, and the sun of justice shineth. There is an unclouded day which shall dawn upon the humble and contrite. The blind shall open their eyes, the deaf shall hear, and the tongue of the dumb shall be unloosed to God's endless praise.

SERMON IX.

CONTRITION.

"Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much."—S. LUKE, vii. 47.

For the Season of Lent.

THE great duty to which we are called at this season, is that of sincere repentance for all our past and present sins. The Church endeavors to excite a true contrition in our hearts, by every means within her power. On the one hand she displays the tender mercy of God which seeks the penitent sinner, and on the other portrays the awful doom which awaits the obstinate transgressor. Justice and love are the alternate themes of her moving appeals ; while to quicken the just in the race of righteousness, she draws the veil from the burning flames of purgatory, and bids us behold the purity which the Sovereign Majesty is forced to exact. We are called to self-examination, to penance, to prayer, in

order that we may sound our own weakness and truly humble ourselves before God. Exterior works are in the highest degree necessary, not only as the fruits of a living sorrow, but to fulfil the requirements of the divine law. Yet, above all, is contrition necessary for any one who has sinned. It is his only way of recovery, and without it all exterior works will avail nothing for salvation. The sinner may fast, and pray, and give alms to the poor, and even make great sacrifices for others; but if he have no true grief for his crimes, he can never escape eternal punishment. The baptism of tears is the only cleansing the guilty soul can find; and, whatever be our professions, we can obtain reconciliation with our offended Father only by prostrating ourselves in the dust, and confessing our wretchedness. It is, then, of the highest importance that we understand well this duty, which is the great work of the penitent's whole life. And, as the subject is so momentous for us all, let us pray that the Holy Ghost will deign to direct, inspire, and bless our reflections.

We are to consider the nature of contrition, and some of its qualities.

I. By contrition, we understand a true grief or sorrow of heart for our sins, with a detestation of our iniquities, and a firm purpose to offend God no more. Most of us will need no illustration of so plain a definition. It is easy to comprehend what is meant by grief; for very few have passed many years in the world without tasting its bitterness. Affliction may have crossed our path, and shrouded our whole sky in blackness. We may have seen days when we longed for the night, and nights when we prayed for the morning. Our hearts have turned upon themselves, and memory's busy fingers may have played upon their strings to drive us almost to distraction. What an hour is it for the human soul, when the candle of hope seems extinguished, and life has lost all its elasticity! Who does not know how to grieve for a deep earthly loss, the death of those who seemed a part of ourselves, the destruction of treasures which years had laid up, the breaking of idols which the heart had intensely and foolishly worshipped? Let us apply this knowledge of sorrow, and see the soul which has lost grace, and heaven, and God; look into its depths of bitterness, and behold indeed a true cause for grief. It is not a

temporary loss which frightens the trembling transgressor. He has not lost either father or mother, or wife or child. No gilded bauble has been wrested from his hands. No treasure has crumbled to dust in the coffers where avarice had enshrined them. He has lost the peace of his heart, and go where he will, he can find no rest. Within, all is reproach; and without, the fair and innocent face of nature preaches the blackness of his ingratitude. He has sacrificed his birthright, spurned the love that came to earth to bleed and die for him, and driven his God far away from his soul. The red marks of guilt are on his forehead, and the black stains of pollution cover him, and he is an outcast, exiled by his own act from the home of peace and joy. Where is there an evil to be compared with sin? Where is there sorrow like that of the awakened penitent? He cannot forgive himself for the wrong which has inflicted such deep wounds upon his moral nature. Passions he once did not even know are now raging for satisfaction in his breast; and evil appetites, grown strong by indulgence, burn like the flame in the dry stubble. He is not the man he once was; and he traces all his misery to one single sin, one

first and fearful departure from the path of virtue. Convicted of ingratitude, he turns to survey his loss and his gain, and finds no language to express his detestation for the cause of his ruin. What seemed so beautiful is now absolutely hideous, without one feature of attraction and, looking at the length and breadth of his transgression, he hates its malignity, and even detests himself because of his fall. The slime of the serpent is upon him, and can he ever wash it off? He is guilty of the blood of his Lord, and will that blood be now vouchsafed for his cleansing? To sum up all in one word: He has lost God, and can he ever find Him again? He determines to arise from the pit of iniquity, and to confess his sin, and at least to ask for pardon. He raises his eyes to heaven, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and strength is given him to throw himself on his knees and cry out, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee." He is firmly resolved to sin no more. He has plucked out the right eye. It cost him acute pain; but it is now over, and he will try to save his whole body from hell. Whether God forgives him or not, he will never go back to the vices which have

well-nigh broken his heart; he will seek the path of justice, and will spend the remainder of his days in works of penance, which shall undo the evil his own unfortunate hands have wrought. Need I say, dear brethren, how the Father of mercy will receive the returning prodigal? He will go out to meet him; will take him in His arms, and restore to him all the privileges of a son.

II. To understand better the work of contrition, let us examine, for a moment, some of the qualities which render it so efficacious in the sight of God.

The sorrow of which we speak is an interior grief, which takes possession of the whole man. The cause is the deep wound within the sinner's soul, which, far out of the sight of men, produces its steady and unrelenting agony. No momentary burst of feeling will give relief, and no external joys can assuage the pain. Friends may strive to comfort us, but the ulcer is too deep for them to touch; and the penitent knows that the stranger cannot meddle with his bitterness. Time heals all the wounds of earth; but this malady is beyond even his reach, for no length of years will cover over the sorrows which divine

grace alone can soothe. Mere external evils soon pass away, or at least the mind becomes accustomed to their pressure, and the body has a wonderful power of reaction against the advances of pain and disease. Contrition is a sorrow which even man's strong will cannot grapple with. It cannot be thrown off, or laid aside, according to the fancy of the moment. It is a strong interior fire which cannot be extinguished by violence; for it must burn, until the matter on which it feeds shall have been consumed. Sin is the cause of the sorrow, and hence this salutary fire will burn, until all the effects of past or present transgression be obliterated from the soul. Here is a spiritual malady going down to the depths of man's being, and requiring the treatment of an almighty physician, who knows all the springs of human life.

It is, therefore, the power of divine grace which produces contrition, and constitutes it as a living and supernatural grief. Ordinary sorrow is easily excited, and as easily dies away, but leaves no impress on the soul for good or evil. Men are afflicted by a thousand causes, and in the course of a life, generally find more days

for weeping than for rejoicing. They fix their affections upon some object, which first disappoints, and then deceives; and the great king of terrors strikes on the right hand and the left, and breaks asunder the tenderest bonds. In our fallen state it is easier to see around us the signs of sorrow, than the marks of joy. Many also have regret for sin, simply because they dread its consequences, or fear the punishments of a future state. And this is only a mere natural emotion, simply the desire to escape pain, or avoid misery. We would be glad to put away from us even the results of our own deliberate actions. But in this there is no real grief for having offended God, and no real purpose to amend. The sinner would sin again, if he could shake off the obligation to punishment; and he will sin again, even in spite of that obligation. You will see the soul tremble and quake as the hour of death approaches; you will see signs of remorse, and hear vehement protestations of contrition. Let once the danger pass away, and let the vigor of health return, and every trace of penitence has vanished, and old sins are eagerly sought. God, who reads the heart, saw only mere natural

emotions, where man beheld the seeming evidences of a true conversion. Any finite intellect will tremble at the nearness of the infinite; any heart, weighed down with guilt, will fear the coming of the Creator. And, when flesh and sense give way, and all things seen seem to be unanchored beneath the carnal and worldly minded, where can the stricken soul look for aid? Earth vanishes from his vision, and crumbles at his touch, and nothing stands but God, whom he has offended, whom he cannot meet, because He is a consuming fire. Mere natural sorrow has nothing to do with eternal life. Grace may bless it, and by it lead the sinner to conversion; but of itself, it will not advance him one step towards heaven. Do we not often see how affliction dries up the nobleness of nature, makes man selfish and thankless, and quenches all the springs of generosity? Contrition, which God produces, is the work of grace, and has the power to wean the soul from sin, and lead to a new and holy life. Supernatural sorrow leaves not the penitent in the mire of iniquity, weeping over his misery, and taking no steps to rise. It has a quickening power; a principle of life which leads the sinner towards the source of all

health and strength, and makes him seek for healing at the feet of the very mercy he has outraged.

And as this sorrow of sincere conversion is supernatural in its principle and source, so is it universal in its object. Each and every sin adds its weight to the burden of the prodigal, and all past transgressions are embraced in his true repentance. We cannot grieve for one sin, and rejoice over another equally guilty in the sight of Heaven. We may lament the consequences of one particular act, and there may be one crime which seems to be the root of bitterness. But as all sin offends God, and as the love of Him, in some degree, is necessary to contrition, we can never be truly penitent without sorrow, remorse, and even detestation for every one of our iniquities. He who proposes to cling to one of his sins, has no real grief for any of them. The mind cannot entertain two contradictory emotions; and where the love of sin in any degree enslaves the soul, it drives out the love of God. Neither could the Infinite Majesty accept such a repentance, or pardon for one offence, and at the same time leave another unforgiven. God would then be reconciled and unreconciled

with the sinner. Sometimes between hostile armies a truce is declared; and this is an evidence of weakness on one or both sides of the combat: but the Almighty has no need of such an armistice, and never receives the rebel unless He opens the arms of unlimited mercy, and clasps him as a child to His bosom. By this universality of our contrition we may judge of its merit; and if we find ourselves still bound to any sinful passion or unlawful affection, we may be sure that our professions of repentance are insincere. We are trying to deceive ourselves and compromise with the enemy. We are doing nothing to gain the pardon of the past, or lay up a solid hope for the future. The secret of our hearts is the stronghold of the adversary, and he sits on the throne from which we have exiled our Maker and Redeemer. The devil knows his power, and is content; but the eyes of the Omniscient search our every thought, and spurn the offering of deceit.

If, then, the returning sinner has a true grief for every one of his crimes, God is working within him to bring him back once more, and he has but to take hold of the outstretched hand, and walk in safety to the home which he

deserted. He despises himself for what he has done, and he will never trust again his own strength. He hates with all the intensity of his heart the vice he loved so well, the tempter, whose silken bands were cords of iron; he has shaken off these chains, and once more, in the image of his Creator, he raises his head among the innocent and pure. Nature, animate and inanimate, is in harmony with his aspirations, and he feels once more at home in the universe which his own Father has made. Now his holy purposes will ripen till they are accomplished; his tears will become fruitful, and every day will see him advancing towards holiness. Shadows one by one depart from his path. Great stains on his baptismal raiment are, one by one, washed away. Gradually he leaves earth in the distance, and, with the cross on his shoulder, presses after his Master. He will find Him in Gethsemane; will meet Him bending beneath the scourge; will be one with Him on Calvary. He will learn to die first to the world, then to himself; and he will be buried with his Lord, that one day he may rise here on earth to live a life of union, and hereafter an eternity of glory. The prisoner is set free, the scarred and wounded

captive regains the vigor of health, and triumphs over the law of decay. Here we behold the last and crowning quality of contrition. It is efficacious for eternal life, accomplishes its work, tears the sinner from all his vices, transforms him into a new man, and sets his feet in the way of everlasting bliss. Mere human sorrow dies away, and leaves the criminal in his prison and chains, while the grace of God converts the soul, and is fruitful for heaven. Who that deplores the misery of his lost and ruined condition will not seek this path of perfect recovery? Nothing so illustrates the love and bounty of God, as this His magnificent mercy to the outcast and vile. He seems to forget all their pollution, and to choose them for the especial objects of His grace. He washes them clean, animates them with His own Spirit, and makes them the jewels of His eternal crown.

The voice of mercy now calls to every sinner, and begs him to return in the day of grace, ere the shadows of an unending night overtake him. No one need despair, for the way of salutary contrition is open to all. The example of the Magdalen is both the model of true penitence and the encouragement of the prodigal. "Many

sins were forgiven her, because she loved much." She was beautiful and fair, the daughter of devout parents, and the child of many prayers. She was early trained in the ways of religion, and schooled to the practice of virtue. Her step was light and cheerful upon earth; for she was pure, and her heart was innocent. In the early blushes of womanhood the tempter found her weakness, and gradually drew her affections from God. An unworthy object crossed her path, and after long conflicts accomplished his work, and seduced her from the paths of virtue. She had never dreamed of such a fall; but she had wandered to the brow of the precipice, and in a moment when she least expected it, her feet trembled, and she was gone. She awoke as from a fearful sleep, found herself betrayed, and the priceless coronet of her purity was taken away. Despair followed shame. She would not return to the home which she had disgraced; she would be a wanderer in the streets. The Pharisee and the publican passed her by with a look of scorn; and sinners, far greater than herself, despised her. She had lost her self-respect, and even hell were less painful than the restless torment of her bosom. She

plunges into crime, and sets no bounds to passion ; for now she has neither care, nor shame, nor hope. The good Shepherd came on earth, and walked among the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In the crowd she heard His voice, and there was something in its tones which went to her heart ; she saw His miracles, and heard His tender exhortations to the sinner. Hope revived amid the darkness, which, like a funeral pall, covered her soul. She would sin no more ; she would follow His footsteps, and gradually learn of His doctrine, until she should find strength to approach Him. But He whom she sought had first found her, and was working within her. All the past came up to her. She looked upon herself,—her faded body—her fallen soul—her broken heart,—and memory went back to happy days when innocence was her portion, when the glad freshness of her youth was an offering to her Creator, when the incense of morning went up from an altar unsullied as the dew of heaven. She had need of a physician, and here was one who could heal even her great malady. She resolves to go to Him, and lay open her bleeding wounds. She therefore seeks Him, not in the crowded street, where she would

be unnoticed amid the throng, not in the Temple, where publicans and sinners pressed after Him, but where pride should make its last and perfect sacrifice; where every one would despise her—in the house of the self-righteous Pharisee. The poor penitent comes therefore where Jesus was seated at table, and first looks into the chamber. No one notices her, and no one repulses her; she advances timidly, till she meets the scornful looks of the Jews, and then, trembling, falls upon her knees. She is now at the feet of the good Shepherd. A little more courage, and she draws nearer, and grace she never knew before overwhelms her. Her head bows down, and thick and fast the burning tears fall upon the sacred feet. The flesh of her God is bathed by the stream that flows from her eyes; and as He does not forbid, she lets the band fall from her forehead, and wipes His feet with her dishevelled hair. Something like the sweetness of pardon seems to dawn upon her, and her nearness to her God seems to change her very being. She takes her last possession, the box of costly spikenard, and breaks it upon His feet, and the fragrant ointment was less precious in the sight of Jesus than the ardor of

her contrition. She even ventures more, and touches with her lips the flesh so soon to be torn by the nail. He repulses not her daring, and so she weeps and rains kisses upon the sacred feet. These kisses were the symbol of perfect reconciliation; and, as she buries her head where the sinner would hope to rest forever, a new day dawns upon her. The black tide of pollution rolls away, and she seems to have bathed seven times in Jordan, and to awake with her leprosy cleansed, and with the gushing heart of a child to serve her great Redeemer. She had said nothing; she could say nothing: He knew all; and He had accomplished all: "Thy sins are forgiven thee," were His only words; and they gave her back her guiltless youth, and opened heaven upon her sorrowing eyes. "She loved much," loved vehemently, loved as no earthly spouse can love. The days of the passion were near, and the tearful penitent was found on Calvary, where His open heart was her only home. Whom Jesus had pardoned, Mary embraced in the arms of more than maternal love, and therefore she was a servant to attend the steps of the Mother of God; and when seven arrows were forced into the

mother's bosom, and virgin purity clasped the cross, she was there to cling to the foot of the accursed tree, to mingle her tears with the cleansing stream which had made her pure once more. Her hands anointed the all-holy body for burial ; and her eyes were sentinels keeping watch around His strong sepulchre. To her He made His second appearance on the day of resurrection ; and when He had ascended on high, she retired from the world to think of none but Him, to be the pattern of holy souls which live to sympathize with the sorrows of His passion. We know she has a throne in heaven, amid the consuming glories of cherubim and seraphim, where she is exalted to be the model and patroness of the repenting sinner.

Why, then, shall not we who have sinned find encouragement in her recovery ? Can we not love as she did, and, like her, seek the feet of the Crucified to weep, and confess our wretchedness ? He is here, seeking us, and knocking at the door of our hearts. Oh ! let every burdened sinner turn to Him with sincere contrition ; and the scales of sense shall fall from our eyes, and the sight of the only true, and the only good, shall convert us to the paths of justice forever.

SERMON X.

THE SOUL REPENTING.

“My sin is always before me.”—PSALM l. 5.

For Lent.

THREE powers of the soul of man, as the fathers tell us, symbolize the mystery of the all-holy Trinity. The memory, the understanding, and the will, sum up the powers of the one undying principle of life within us. This, though a shadow of the marvellous nature of God, is only a shadow. Like all human symbols, it fails to make a perfect image of Him whom we adore. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God, and yet there are not three Gods, but one God. Nevertheless, it is only piety to observe how the incomprehensible Creator has shadowed forth through all His works the saving truths which He has divinely taught us by His Church.

Man was made in the image of God, who has wonderfully impressed His likeness upon his soul. Three powers, distinct from each other, resemble the threefold nature of the Creator. Yet it is the same soul which understands, remembers things past, and wills efficaciously, so that there is also a faint illustration of the divine unity.

These three powers were formed only for God; and man is called with all his mind to embrace the everlasting Father, and to be filled in his intelligence with the true light. The memory was formed to keep the eye upon the wonderful ways in which He has been pleased to deal with our race, cherishing a deep sense of all His love, grace, and mercy; the understanding was to be illumined by Him who is truth; and the will was to run steadily after God, never resting till it was wholly one with Him. Thus the inward soul was to be the temple of God, from which ever went up the pure flame of devotion to Him, who, throned in the highest, yet condescended to dwell with the meek and lowly.

Such was the state of original justice from which Adam fell; a state undefiled by sin, and

a state of supernatural grace, which clothed, filled, illumined the man whom Scripture calls the Son of God. But when sin entered, and grace was lost, the state of man was changed. Sin was upon his memory. His understanding was unwilling to rest in child-like faith on what God revealed. He sought out many inventions; and as faith, a gift only to the pure, was gone, the eyes of his mind were darkened. His will inclined from holiness, and he ran greedily in the way of iniquity.

And though many sought to be free—though the Spirit of God glorified many of the elder saints who prevailed to have power with God, as Abraham, Noah, Daniel, and Job,—yet they could not be made perfect, until Christ came to fill them with His fulness, and to take them from the house of darkness to His own house of light.

In Him, beloved, we find all the gifts of Eden restored, and by baptism are made, more truly than our first parents were, the sons of God. For, verily partakers of Him, and members of His quickening body, temples of the indwelling Spirit, we are again filled with the light of God, which not only illumines the soul, but by

the virtue of His flesh enlivens the body. Thus we are able with all the powers of the soul to seek and find God, who alone can fill and satisfy the creatures He has made. And though there is a struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, yet the grace we have is sufficient for us. Though we have evil desire as a thorn in the flesh to assail us, yet the flesh of Jesus, mingled with ours, shall destroy it, and mortality shall be swallowed by life, even the life on whom we feed, in whom we live—our Lord and King, who is over all things, blessed forevermore.

To those, now, who have fallen from all this grace by sin, worse than Adam's, there must come pains of loss and pains of sense, which both in justice and in mercy God will exact. Hence, in the penitence of the sinning Christian, the powers of the soul are the field of God's vengeance, and the body bows under the inward struggle; as members fit only for the burning must, by suffering, be purified. So those whom God had washed and sanctified, must seek with all their souls to return to Him, and again make clean those powers which they have defiled.

The poor sinner cries aloud unto God: "I

know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me ;” since in the memory, the understanding, and the will, which God had quickened, which he has perverted, he must make his way back to the cleanness of a new heart and a new soul. The whole soul is gathered up for this great work on which all depends, this struggle on which hangs life or death. These three powers blend in one endeavor, and send up supplication to the all-holy Trinity, and reach the ear and heart of God.

The memory has its overwhelming load of sin, by which the spirit is made to sink in the deep of its own nothingness, and plead its misery to Him whose compassions fail not. And never can that sight of our own corruption pass away from the inward eye. Never can the prodigal forget that dreary waste in which he found himself. Never, in all that afterwards we may be, can we cease to remember what we were, when we awoke to any thing like a true sight of ourselves, and saw the sin which we had cherished, and God whom we had despised. So true is the memory of a penitent in this its office, that it would seem as if the remembrance of sin would always bear down the soul ; as if

the constant thought of past defilement would ever be a stain to keep us from that purity which alone can see God. It is true, moreover, that in the first fervor of penitence we do not see the whole vileness of our crimes, as afterwards we are strengthened to see them. God spares us, and gives us no more than we can bear; but when divine love again begins to flow within us, and the seal of pardon has loosed our chains, then memory with new life throws before us the true record of the past, written in burning characters, and God seems to say, "See where thou wast, what thou hast been;" and hardly do the fires of the abyss seem more tolerable than the embrace of death in which we were corrupting. I do not here go beyond what ought to be common experience. It were too much for us to speak of those masters of the spiritual life, who ran unwearied far beyond their fellows; who, like the eagles, renewed their strength, and rose from height to height, who gained almost God's hatred of sin. Yet, however God guides us, the memory works in a twofold way. It is the instrument of punishment and of blessing; since the pain it brings leads to more earnest contrition, and the open

wounds are more surely healed. Our past sins are ever the source of present temptations, and the cause of present weakness; and he whose transgressions are always before him, learns to guard against the wiles of Satan, and watch against the surprises of an insidious foe. And strange to say, as he goes on in the divine life, this load of memory so painful shall become the source of grateful joy. For, once laid down at the foot of his Saviour's cross, the remembrance of mercy pervades the soul, and there come thoughts of divine love;—love stronger than death; love bleeding; love crucified; Jesus seeking and bringing back the wandering sheep. We call to mind the journey back from the wilderness, when the good Shepherd bore us in His arms, and gently carried us through that night till the day dawned and the shadows fled away. We remember the words: "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. Go in peace, and sin no more." The sweetness of restoration and cleansing draws the soul nearer to God; and, confessing that it is nothing, and worse than nothing, it clings unto Christ as all in all, and is wholly lost in Him. "He who was dead is come to life. He who was lost is found."

So again : the memory of the restored sinner is filled with God ; and all the past speaks of Him who so loved us as to die for us ; who sought us when we strayed, and brought us back to the fold of salvation.

The understanding also comes up to the work of penitence : compares God's holy law and the sinner's way of bitterness, and acts as judge upon the transgressor. Darkened by sin, it had chosen the principles of men and the arts of the world ; had justified the sinner in his course of rebellion. Turning from the perfect standard of divine truth and goodness, it sought for wilful blindness, till sight was gone and judicial darkness came as the visitation of the Almighty. Only this explains the madness of those who run from sin to sin, binding their souls with the cords of death for the pleasure of a moment. Truly sin is utter foolishness ; and they who turn away from God, they who bring sin into His very presence and temple, are fools indeed, —without understanding.

The penitent learns to know this ; and God pours in upon him that illumination by which the shadows that dimmed his understanding are driven away, and, gaining a true knowledge of

self in the heavenly light, he detests himself and all he has, which is not of God. So, beginning to view his sin as God views it, he gladly accepts the salutary discipline He has provided, and spares not himself, that hereafter he may be spared. This is that reasonable repentance which submits entirely to God's law, which is fruitful in good works, which would atone for past neglects by present diligence. And he who enters on such a course shall steadily advance in the light of God, till all within shall be clear, as when the bright shining of a candle gives its certain light. For only so, do any attain to *illumination*; only so, does the experience of sin become, in the hand of God, a shield against the arrows of Satan, whom once we served, of whose bitter cup we have tasted. For a *sinner*, the knowledge of sin is the first step towards that blissful knowledge of Him, whom truly to know, is life unending.

Of all the powers of the soul, there is none so Godlike as the will. Angels and men are *free*; free to follow or resist God. Awful as this faculty is, it is the very glory of God's intelligent creation. By his own will the sinner turned from the paths of holiness. By his own will he must

return to his Heavenly Father: “I *will* arise and go,” are his words; and, as unmindful of warnings and inspirations he perversely chose the way of death, and steadily pursued it, so now he must steadily turn his back upon his past evil course, and run for his life to the refuge set before him. He must shut his eyes to all the world may bring before him, close his ears to all that men may say, and press forward, going on in darkness as in light, being honest with himself, and faithful to all God’s inspirations. And, whatever he wills, through the strength of Christ, he shall most truly obtain, provided he follows on to know the Lord, and steadfastly keeps his way, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. Think you, my brethren, that a sinner can make himself a very fiend—a spirit worthy of the lowest abyss; and that a Christian cannot grow in Christ to any stature he shall *will*? Yea, the wil that takes firmly hold of God’s strength is *almighty*, can mount to the highest heaven, can “search even the profound things of God. The reason why we grovel in earthly things—why we have no saving knowledge of God’s truth—why we are dwarfs, pigmies, lifeless

things, is only because we do not *will* to rise; because we are not *resolved* to seek things above. We lay fast hold of this world's joys and treasures, bind ourselves down with bands of earth, and wonder we cannot rise with all our chains about us, bearing sin, impurity, and sordid dust into the very presence of the Lord Almighty. Oh, let us deceive ourselves no longer. If we would be saved, we must *will* repentance, *will* a thorough conversion, *will* what God wills, and only what He wills, follow wherever He guides us; resolved to lose every thing rather than Him whose favor is life, whose wrath is unending woe. In this pilgrimage there are disappointments and fears, there are waves and storms, the tumults of the people, the voices of Antichrist; and it needs a steadfast *will*, which, planting the believer's feet upon the Rock, may abide the fury of the tempest; and, when the surges dash themselves and are broken in fragments, may be unmoved as the foundation which God has laid, and which standeth sure forever.

Oh that we who are sinners, yet penitents, might so turn unto God with our whole souls, that again in our memory, understanding, and will,

His perfect light might shine; that we, whose sins testify against us, might, even in this vale of tears, see His face, hear His word, and faithfully do His will!

SERMON XI.

DANGER OF RELAPSE.

“Then goeth he, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering, they dwell there.”
—S. LUKE, xi. 26.

For the Third Sunday in Lent.

THE gospel of this day sets before us some important truths which should be well known to us all. It portrays the power and wiles of Satan, and the terrible fate of those Christians who, redeemed from darkness, give themselves up again to his service. The apostle tells us that we are surrounded by evil spirits, who war unceasingly against our souls; that our adversary, the devil, goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. The world, the flesh, and the devil, are the enemies with whom we have to contend; for “our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the spirit of wicked-

ness in high places." On this great struggle we enter with the assured hope of victory, through Christ our Lord, who overcame the tempter in His own person, and who seeks to repeat His conquest in us. In Him we are new-born. By Him we are clothed in the panoply of justice, and fortified with weapons against every art of the adversary. We go not to the battle-field alone. We go with good angels at our side, who bear before us the banner of the Captain of our salvation. How can we fail with such provision for the contest? Yet, as neither the influences of grace, nor the temptations of Satan are irresistible, the issue of the conflict depends upon our wills, and God has placed life and death in our own choosing. Hence many fall away from Christ, prefer the service of His foes, and are led captive at their own will. There are two rival kingdoms ever at war, and ever trenching one upon the other; and the enemies of God are never at rest, but lie in wait for souls, that, as hour after hour passes away, they may spoil the Church of some trophy, and consign some poor spirits to an eternal death.

Many and great are their victories beyond the fold of Christ, where the stain of original

sin has never been washed away, and God's sanctifying grace has never come. For the slaves of passion is already kindled the everlasting fire, and the dupes of Mammon go smiling on, deceived even at the grave; and many a soul drawn to the very door of life, is retaken, to fall deeper and perish more miserably. Oh, who shall tell the records of that battle-field, where Satan exults, and good angels weep at the ruin of man!

But the worst victory of the adversary is within the fold, where the sacred home of Jesus is spoiled, and one whom God had chosen for His own is overcome and seduced away to destruction: when from the fold is lost the sheep which the good Shepherd had sought; had found weary and sick; had carried home on His own shoulders, and bound to His own bosom. Such is the picture of the gospel: "When a strong man armed keepeth his courts, those things are in peace which he possesseth." The soul, in a state of grace, keepeth its inward peace, and is strong against any attack of the enemy. So long as the will is truly on God's side, that soul cannot grievously fall, nor can the treasures of grace be lost. But, when there

comes a dividing of the heart, and in any duty a compromise of conscience, a neglect of what is commanded, or willing unfaithfulness to grace, then little by little the spiritual strength is wasted away, and the unwatching soul falls a prey to insidious temptations. For think not, beloved, that the unclean spirit once cast out, and compelled to give way to the word and presence of Christ, will return as he went away, with no stronger force, no more powerful seductions: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through places without water, seeking rest; and not finding, he saith, I will return into my house whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished." The spirits of evil, already burning with the avenging fire which is within them, find no ease but in working evil in the hearts of men. When restless in dry places, they wander, watching for this and that occasion of sin, when they may re-enter their old habitations. Were not the house swept and garnished, empty of good purposes and indulging in worldly ways, they would not dare another struggle. Nor can the heart which has been the abode of the seven-fold Spirit be retaken so easily: "Then goeth

the adversary, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and entering in, they dwell there. And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first." The Spirit of God would not have left that soul had it not given way to every sin, and willingly chosen "darkness rather than light."

Well may we say that this is the worst victory of Satan: defilement darkens the soul which God had made pure; remorse, ever rankling, is kindled in the breast where God's peace had dwelt; the temple of the Holy Ghost has become the cage of every unclean and hateful bird; and where once exhaled the fragrant odor of sanctity, now is nothing but loathsome corruption. Oh, we cannot know, in this life, the hatefulness of that soul which has lost God; nor tremble enough to think of that deepest abyss where they shall be cast who "have trodden under foot the Son of God, and have offered an affront to the Spirit of grace!" And wonderful, in this view, is the forbearance of God. When He might have created legions of pure beings to love and praise Him forever, He yet waiteth, with all His omnipotence, upon the feeble will of man: not only has He profusely

shed the blood of His Son, but now He waiteth to see if that blood will be embraced or despised.

And now, beloved, this picture comes forcibly home to our own hearts; and, terrible as is the thought, there is not one here who may not fall from the grace of God—there is not one here who will not fall, unless he continue to labor with daily diligence against sin, and is daily striving to advance in the heavenward journey. Perseverance is the gift of God, and it will be given only to those who make a good use of the graces they have received. Each one of us has now his own work to do; and if that work is not done, his soul is not saved. At this season, therefore, it becomes each one to examine himself and find out his state before God, to weep over past sin, to seek the sacraments with greater fervor, lest the day of mercy pass, and the good Spirit be grieved by too long neglect. The triumph of Satan over the Christian soul is not achieved at once; it is just in proportion to the decay of our vigilance that he gains upon us. First comes *idleness* in the spiritual life; then a pretence of virtues which one has not; then exposure to the occasions of sin; and so an easy

door is opened to the enemy. The soul on which God has poured many graces, begins to think less of those graces, as if they were always to continue; takes less care to use them well, and rests from labor, as if further struggle were not necessary. So the sense of God's love gradually fades, and the tempter finds him doing nothing for his salvation. Prayers become more lifeless, confessions cold, communions less desired; duties are not left, but the heart is slowly being drawn from the life within, and the world is gaining. In this state, passions which had slept revive, and old temptations return with more than their former vigor. Then the occasions of sin, at first not avoided, are at last even sought; and here begins that long struggle between conscience and pleasure: excuses which once were esteemed but prevarications, are, at the end of the struggle, almost unresistingly forced upon the dying conscience; and in ways of its own choosing, the redeemed and regenerate soul is on its way to eternal death, all the worse for the grace which it has despised. Would to God that this were a less frequent history. The "last state of that man becomes worse than the first." Harder is it to bring

him back to the ways of righteousness than if he had not known them. The truths of religion make less impression, for the very reason that he has abused them. He may return, like the prodigal; and when he does, we know how lovingly he is received. But, alas! he is in that fearful state where warnings most often fall in vain, and vengeance, long delayed, breaks forth. God cannot be trifled with forever, though His long-suffering seems to have no bound.

How then, beloved, shall such a fall be avoided by us who desire to live for the life to come? The way is simple and plain, though by no means without its difficulties and trials. Almighty God has made the way of His commandments so plain, that none need be mistaken as to their duty. We have but to go forward in the diligent use of the means of grace, to "be sober, and to watch," and to take good heed lest the various temptations of Satan surprise us unawares, or overcome us when sleeping in God's service. Before we can be tempted to any great sin, we must be drawn away from our carefulness in the duties of religion, and deprived of that celestial armor which is terrible to the spirits of evil. How can he expect to

keep himself free from mortal sin, who will not use the means, who neglects prayer, the examination of conscience, who assists not often at the divine sacrifice, who lets the love of this world get the rule over the heart, and its shadows shut out the light of God? Alas! there is no neutral ground: either we are faithful soldiers of Christ, or we are subserving the cause of the enemy. "He that is not with me is against me—and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." Let us be persuaded, therefore, to renewed vigilance against every motion of sin; and let us take care that the graces of God do not languish and die in our souls for want of due improvement. If God made known to S. Teresa, when once in a state of temporary coldness, that she was in danger of eternal death, what could He not reveal to many of us, who may content ourselves with only not falling into grievous sin! Be assured, there is no safety but in following up the motions of grace, in doing that to which God's Spirit prompts, and avoiding that which we know to be dangerous, which has often been to us an occasion of sin. Over the faithful the adversary can have no power. He may heap upon him temptations; but, tempta-

tions overcome add to the crown of his glory, and in the midst of all the snares which lie in wait for the just, he may "rejoice as a giant to run the way." Yes; let none be discouraged by the temptations of Satan, though he oppress your holiest hours, or darken the light which surely shines around the soul which seeketh holiness. But take fast hold of the sacraments, they are God's arms of strength, and with them you shall prevail. Rely on God's omnipotence, and you yourselves are omnipotent.

And for such as have fallen, and may now be in a state of mortal sin, the lesson of the gospel comes with fearful interest. At this season they are called with all the warnings of the Church to awake from death and to do penance, that they may live. Now is an acceptable time, now is a day of grace and salvation. Let this season pass unimproved, and you may be lost forever! How long shall wait the God of mercy whom you have despised? The blood of the covenant, which you have counted as a common thing, will cry out for vengeance, if, in the time of salvation, you do not awake and seek the life of your souls.

“Blessed are they who are undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.” Blessed are the pure, who have never stained their baptismal innocence. But blessed, too, are the penitent souls who bend willingly beneath the cross their own sins have raised; and from the heart of Jesus, the fountain of grace, and from the heart of Mary, the well-spring of purity, draw daily a deeper love, for all their sin; a more fervent obedience, for all their rebellion; and a more jealous purity, for all their past defilements. What sinner may not become like Magdalene, loving much, because much was forgiven her; who could never do enough for Him who had reclaimed her, and washed her in His blood? Oh, neglect not the offers of mercy now. Seek the tribunal of penance at once. How long dare you live in mortal sin? Seek God where you know He may be found, and you shall pass from death unto life, and the tempter shall be disarmed, and the bands of death shall break around you, and you shall be free once more in the liberty of the children of God.

The last state of him who forsakes the way of righteousness is worse than the first. Worse and

worse becomes each succeeding fall from God. May He who knoweth our wants, but give us all the grace to seek to know ourselves; to judge ourselves, that we be not judged; and at this time to humble ourselves, and to open all our secret wounds to the healing of His mercy, that so there be not in us any secret sin, or affection to sin, or any part of our hearts left open to the attacks of the enemy. May He give us grace to do penance for the past, and henceforward to be more watchful, lest, after all that God has done for us, we come to a deeper and more dreadful fall.

SERMON XII.

THE SIN OF DAVID

“Cast me not away from Thy face, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.”—PSALM l. 13.

For the Season of Lent

REMARKABLE as was David's sin, still more remarkable was his repentance. The tone and depth of the penitential psalms are far above our experience, and their language seems forced and strange to us. The holiest men have ever had the deepest view of sin; and holy Scripture, inspired by the Spirit of God, has depths for them which others never know. Now a proper sense of sin may be gained in two ways—by an unsinning obedience from our baptism, and by sincere repentance for transgressions committed against grace. In the one case, holiness so rules the heart that sin becomes odious and intolerable as the worst of evils. It is seen as God sees it, abhorred with even His holy abhorrence, and

hated as the great foe of the Creator and His creatures. Such a detestation of sin the angels may have, who, in their unstained purity, gaze upon the divine perfections; and Christians who never had any actual knowledge of evil.

All others must attain to a true sense of sin by penance, by suffering in soul and body for their transgressions, until a thorough purification shall bring them truly to love God, and to detest every thing which offends Him. The Psalms were written by a penitent, by one who had felt the burden of iniquity, and had tasted its exceeding bitterness. Yet they were inspired by the Holy Ghost, who, dwelling in the regenerate, knoweth the penitence they need, as in us and for us He breathes the prayers of the contrite with groanings which no language can utter. They both express the sentiments of a broken heart, and teach the true nature of a sinner's repentance. In the case of David's great sin, we can see how God deals with the transgressor, what penitence He requires, and how we are to find reconciliation with Him.

Grievous indeed was the sin of David. Adultery and murder had stained the ermine of the king of Israel, and driven the Holy Spirit from

his heart. And these great crimes were committed after unexampled favors. He had the wealth and beauty of the world at his feet. He had known the sweetness of divine grace, and the breath of God had often swept his lyre to strains of heavenly music. Now he yields himself to the instincts of his animal nature, and gives himself up, the victim of beastly lusts. He dishonors the home of one of his own captains who were fighting the battles of the Lord ; and when he cannot cover up the crime, he causes the bold soldier to be slain by the sword of the enemy. But the javelin of the Hethite was buried in glory on the plain, and the hands of the king were defiled with his blood.

If, now, the divine justice had fallen upon the guilty monarch, to take away his throne, and cast him into outer darkness, where the drunkard and the adulterer drink their cup of remorse, who could have complained of the speedy judgment? Yet God did not so deal with the royal transgressor. He sent him Nathan the prophet, to awake the sleeping voice of conscience ; and while the sinner pressed his sin to his bosom, it stung him almost to death. The eyes which passion had blinded, opened to see the crimson

hands of the murderer, and a sickening sense of defilement prostrated him in the dust. "Thou art the man," were the words by which the finger of God, pointing to his conscience, impressed its lesson of humiliation. He confessed openly his sin, he threw aside the royal purple, he fasted and lay in sackcloth upon the ground. He refused all consolation, for the broken heart finds no peace but in God. The Lord forgave his sin, and assured him of pardon by the ministry of the prophet. "The Lord hath taken away thy sin," said Nathan. "Thou shalt not die. Nevertheless, because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, for this thing the child that is born to thee shall surely die."* God forgives the sinner indeed, but He leaves him to the temporal punishments due to His justice. These consequences of sin the divine nature demands, and mercy even requires as wholesome medicines for the soul.

David's crimes were pardoned, and the gates of hell were shut upon his confession of guilt, but long and fearful were the trials which followed. The death of his child was the first

* 2 Kings, xii. 13, 14.

stroke. Then came the rebellion of Absalom ; and by his own son he was hurled from his throne, to be an exile until the fearful death of the rebel should inflict a new wound in his paternal heart. Betrayed by his own counsellor, he goes up Mount Olivet, weeping, walking barefoot, with his head covered, to hear the curse of his own people. "Semei, by the hill's side, went over against him, cursing and casting stones at him, and scattering earth. And the king said, Let him alone, and let him curse ; for the Lord hath bid him curse David ; and who is he that shall dare say, Why hath he done so?"* He bowed down his face for shame. His wives were corrupted in open day, and the sword never passed from his house. War rages round him all his days, and he is not allowed to build the temple of the Lord. Such were some of the temporal punishments of his crimes, and the wonderful penitence of his heart meekly and thankfully bore them all.

This history shows how God deals with sin, and we may learn the same lesson from every recorded transgression. From the fall of our first parents, every sin has its appropriate pun-

* 2 Kings, xvi. 10.

ishment. Jacob deceives his father, and is forced to flee for fear of his brother, to hire himself out as a servant, in suffering and want. His own sons deceive him, and Joseph his beloved child is stolen from his arms. Aaron makes the golden calf, and dies before the land of promise is reached. Moses was exasperated and speaks irreverently to God, and therefore he is shut out from Canaan, and, with his natural vigor unabated, goes up mount Nebo to die. His eyes were not dim, and he may look beyond the Jordan to see the home promised to the patriarchs, but his feet cannot touch the land flowing with milk and honey. Solomon falls into idolatry, and the kingdom of Israel is divided, and ten tribes forsake his father's throne.

These punishments are only in this life, but what a fearful picture does not faith present to us beyond the grave? There, when the fever of life is over, burns a fire, searching, intense, and severe, to purify the just soul, and to prepare it for the vision of God. Both justice and mercy have kindled that awful flame which tries every man's work, and devours the wood, hay, and stubble. All God's dealings with sinners are like the chastisement of David. His most

chosen servants are the especial objects of His purifying discipline. For if the sin be not punished in this life, there will be fearful suffering in the world to come; if the stains of guilt are not washed away here, the searching fire must burn them out hereafter.

Thus the sin of David lays open a terrible view of the danger of all transgression against the divine law. The evil act is no sooner accomplished, than suffering begins. The sting of conscience plants itself in the soul, and who but God can see the long train of sad consequences which follow one single action? Repentance does not take away this salutary provision. Our sins follow us with sure and certain feet. That which was done in darkness meets us in light. The evil actions of childhood pursue us; and even what we have forgotten may be now exacting its share of retribution. By sickness, by afflictions, by disappointments, by spiritual defeats, by loss of grace, do we pay the penalty which in this life God's merciful justice demands. And all this is independent of the eternal punishment, which the blood of Christ applied in the sacrament of penance has power to remove.

Here, then, we behold the sphere and power of

penitence, and understand how we are to find reconciliation with our offended Judge. The sinner repenting confesses his guilt, and takes upon himself the office of an avenger. He compares his deeds with the holy law of God, arraigns himself at the bar of conscience, and condemns himself to punishment. The feeling of guilt is a conviction of obligation to suffering, and the penitent knows his need of pain. He looks unto Jesus bowed to the earth in Gethsemane, or hanging with every limb dislocated upon the cross, and he needs no argument to prove that the healing process is painful. If even by fire he escapes the wrath to come, it will be too much for an ungrateful wanderer like him. He "judges himself, that he may not be judged." David fasted and lay in sackcloth upon the ground, refusing all comfort or human consolation. So all the practices of repentance are such as to subdue the offending member. The provisions of the Church for fasting, almsgiving, and self-denial accomplish the same end, and lead the sinner to take pain and shame in order to escape God's just judgment. The law of retribution takes effect in our self-inflicted penance, and the temporal penalties of sin are

often averted. What greater mercy can sinners ask, since repentance can never be satisfied without the entire removal of all the effects of transgression? For He, upon whose innocent shoulders our iniquities were laid, is with us in our way of sorrows, hallowing, blessing, and accepting the works and fruits of our contrition. So the pain we suffer becomes remedial in its nature; and as the physician's knife goes down to the depth of our wound, health and soundness return. The eyes are turned from earthly things, the flesh is subdued at the feet of reason, and pride learns to humble itself before God. Man, ambitious and self-sufficient, becomes a little child in docility, and his hopes and fears give him a new view of the divine majesty. He only seeks to spend his days in contrition, while every succeeding year will give him a deeper view of the great evil of his sin, as the arms of divine mercy more and more encircle him, and he is locked in that embrace which casts out all discouragements. Penitence is the breath of the forgiven prodigal; and as he climbs the steep ascent, he will clasp more closely the cross which is the condition of spiritual life, and from which he can never be free until death shall have

landed him where no wave or storm can reach him. Such is the sphere of a true repentance, such the condition which God requires. And thus he who had raised up himself against the divine will, prostrates himself before the rod of vengeance, and ends by thoroughly detesting his rebellion, and having no will but God's.

Now, my brethren, to apply this whole case to ourselves, we have great reason for encouragement in this history of David's fearful fall. His hope is ours, and his free pardon is vouchsafed to us also. We have sinned against greater grace than he had, and yet through the mercy of Christ we may attain to as complete a reconciliation. The psalm which went up to heaven from his broken heart is the expression of the overwhelming emotions of contrition. The deep of man's misery calls unto the deep of the infinite mercy. Confessions of guilt mingle with fervent prayers for cleansing and pardon. The deep shadows of the sinner's night do not put out the lamp of hope, when faith sees in the gloom the pierced hands and feet of the good Shepherd, or hears the gentle tones with which he seeks the wanderer.

In that night calmly rises on the scene the

moon of eternal peace, and Mary reflects into the contrite soul the light which she receives from the face of her Child. The Holy Ghost who incites to pray will surely hear the penitent's prayer. God has not cast out the sinner, while he breathes into his heart the desire of a thorough conversion. Though he deserves only condemnation, yet it is his only hope, that in the light of God's countenance, not wholly withdrawn from him, he may yet see perfect light. "Cast me not away from Thy face, nor take Thy Holy Spirit from me." So, all who turn unto Christ may have this source of certain consolation, that He draws them, against whom they have sinned; and so long as He draws them, He has not left them, and will not abandon them. The Holy Ghost is still their strength, and his present inspirations are the earnest of manifold life. There are many who take comfort from David's sin, who do not at all comprehend the depth of his repentance; and yet it is for the example of his great contrition that his fall is so minutely told in holy Scripture. If we have been so unfortunate as to imitate him in any of his crimes, we must seek to walk in the steps of his repentance. Sin leaves its mark upon the soul, and

the obligation to punishment. The all-seeing Eye beholds every stain we have brought upon our new nature, and our debts to divine justice are all recorded in His books. We have our great work to do; and surely there is nothing overdrawn in the language which the Holy Spirit has dictated. We must be as contrite as was the royal psalmist, if we desire to have his free and entire pardon. Each soul has its own history, and there are times when God is especially nigh to each one of us, when His tender love seeks to give us a truer view of sin. He reproves us, He disappoints our expectations, He touches our hearts in their most sensitive part, or He makes our treasures crumble before our eyes. Sometimes He wrestles fearfully with the soul; and it is because danger is nigh, because sin ensnares us, and He must either pluck out the right eye or cast the whole body into hell. Disease is at the root of the tree, and He must dig about it, and prune off its branches, or it will die. Here then the gracious voice calls us. It is the voice which spoke God's love in Bethlehem, which proclaimed man's pardon on Calvary. Come, sinner, see the work which you have done. Kneel down at my feet, and you

shall see them bleeding from the nail which you drove into them. Let my open arms embrace you, and you can put your fingers into my pierced hands : come a little nearer, place your head on my bosom, and you can gaze into the open side where beats the sacred heart, overflowing with love for the sinner. Here is a refuge from every storm and tempest, a safe asylum from the foe, where every anxiety is cast off, and where the penitent is securely pillowed upon the bosom of his incarnate Lord. The nuptial feast is already set, the voices of the Bridegroom and bride are heard, and we must trim our lamps and wrap ourselves in the wedding-garments. Our baptismal raiment must be as white as when the crystal water was poured upon our brow ; and whatever be our guilt, the blood of Christ will mingle with our tears and wash it all away.

The careless and impenitent sinner fears not the justice of God. "Sentence against the evil is not speedily pronounced," and he takes courage. Divine justice, which gathers as a black cloud over the wicked, often leaves them to themselves until their cup of iniquity is full. But hear what the Spirit declares concerning them by

one of His servants who was well tried in affliction: "Why do the wicked live—are they advanced, and strengthened with riches? Their seed continueth before them, a multitude of kinsmen, and of children's children in their sight. Their houses are secure and peaceable, and the rod of God is not upon them. Who have said unto God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him; and what doth it profit us if we pray to Him? How often shall the lamp of the wicked be put out, and a deluge come upon them, and He shall distribute the sorrows of His wrath? They shall be as chaff before the face of the wind, and as ashes which the whirlwind scattereth. God shall lay up the sorrow of the father for his children; and when he shall repay, then he shall know. His eyes shall see his own destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty."* "When he shall be filled, he shall be straitened; he shall burn, and every sorrow shall fall upon him. He shall flee from weapons of iron, and shall fall upon a bow of brass. The sword is drawn out, and cometh forth from its scabbard,

* Job, xxi. 7-20.

and glittereth in his bitterness; the terrible ones shall go and come upon him. All darkness is hid in his secret places. The heavens shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him.”*

Like unto this are the words of the psalmist. “Behold these are sinners, and yet abounding in the world: they have obtained riches. When they were lifted up, Thou hast cast them down. How are they brought to desolation! They have suddenly ceased to be; they have perished by reason of their iniquity. As the dream of them that awake, O Lord, so in Thy city Thou shalt bring their image to nothing.”† Then it is fearfully true, that “what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. He that soweth in his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth in the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.” And “they that sow in tears shall reap in joy.” Blessed then are the wounds of our good Physician, who smites but to heal. Blessed are the ways of penance, which lead the poor sinner up to God. Oh, how much we need, in our weakness, to look steadfastly to Him who is our strength. Where shall

* Job, xx. 21-27.

† Psalms, lxxii. 12-20.

we fly but to Thee, O Saviour of man, who didst bear our very sins? In the hour of trial, in the pains of death, in the day of judgment, be this the sinner's prayer, "Cast me not away from Thy face nor take Thy Holy Spirit from me."

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SERMON XIII.

THE OCCASIONS OF SIN.

“And the last state of that man becometh worse than the first.”—ST. LUKE, xi. 26.

For the Third Sunday in Lent.

SOME of the holy fathers have told us that it is easier to find one who has preserved his innocence from baptism, than one who, having sinned, has truly repented. This remark at first sight startles us, and seems to be overdrawn. And yet, if we examine carefully the nature of penance and the instability of the returning sinner, we shall see how very few really turn from their sins and steadily persevere to eternal life. Many in a season like the present are awakened to see the danger of their condition, are truly convinced of sin, and make strong purposes of amendment. Yet these resolutions do not endure, and in a few months the old enemy comes back and regains his wonted power. Another

Lent, perhaps, will find these same penitents immersed in iniquity, and more hardened than ever to the calls of God. It is the constant grief of every true minister of Christ. The garden in which he labors brings forth flowers and buds of bright promise, only to disappoint his zeal, for they soon wither beneath the sun, or perish in the storm. Souls begin well, and for a time give cheering hope of permanent recovery; but suddenly some temptation arrests their course, they fall back into sin again, and every way of penance is forsaken. To inquire into the cause of this instability, would be far beyond the limits of a single discourse. We know from the gospel of to-day that the devil, once having possession of a heart, is not easily driven away. He is banished with great difficulty; and vanquished for a moment, is only the more anxious to return. He comes back, not alone, but with new temptations, accompanied with seven spirits more wicked than himself. He watches around the soul, waiting for the first negligence, the first careless moment, that he may enter as a welcome guest. The power of the world is strong to seduce the heart, and the concupiscence of the flesh is easily kindled into

a flame. And yet there is one thing which more than any other is the cause of the penitent's fall. In far the majority of cases, the poor sinner is lost because he does not avoid the occasions of sin. Here is the stronghold of the tempter, and here thousands are hourly entangled and bound in chains of death, who might have been made pure as Magdalene, whose love was in proportion to her transgression. And it is easily seen that the last state of the falling penitent is worse than the first. He sins against greater grace, and by a natural law of reaction, plunges deeper in the abyss of crime. And he is more deaf to every voice of heaven, his sleep is more profound, because the call he has once heard in vain has not the power to awaken him. It is easier for God to raise the dead, than to awaken the sleeping soul.

To improve, then, one of the lessons of this day, let us consider the occasions of sin, their great danger, and the means by which we must avoid them.

I. An occasion of sin is any place, person, or thing which ordinarily induces to sin. Thus there are certain places where vice and impurity reign, and into which no one can go without

danger. There are persons whose very company leads to sin, either of thought, word, or action; and there are things of which the sight or touch excites unlawful passion. There are remote occasions common to all, from which every one must as far as possible abstain, if he seek in truth the salvation of his soul. When, however, we ourselves have fallen many times under the power of any of these dangers, the occasion becomes proximate, and it is certain that if we are exposed we shall fall again. A general principle becomes to us a particular law of our spiritual being. Thus if any one has sinned against purity, the company of the person with whom he has sinned is always a proximate occasion of sin to him. He cannot trust himself a moment within that influence which has once been his ruin. If any one has been addicted to drunkenness, the place where he has been led into vice, as well as the presence of evil associates, is fatally dangerous to his soul. We need no argument to convince us of facts which our own eyes witness every day, which perhaps a miserable experience has made us well understand. Any circumstance which has such power over us as to induce us to sin in

thought, word, or deed, is to us the most dangerous of temptations. We all have our weaknesses, and they are the consequence of past transgressions. Every heart has its own bitterness, and its own inclination to some special vice. It is a dictate of even natural wisdom to guard against dangers which we foresee, and to be forewarned by the knowledge of our infirmity.

II. The danger of exposure to such occasions is self-evident. Sooner or later, mortal sin and eternal death will be the consequence. It matters not how sincere repentance may have been, nor how long the penitent may have persevered in the way of holiness. If he give way to this temptation, and allow himself to be placed in the way of transgression, he will surely fall. Even in death the soul has been known to forsake God, and for the comfort of an old sinful affection, to sacrifice all hope of salvation. No one can withstand the influence of an enemy which, opening afresh the fearful wounds of the past, lets out the very life-blood and leaves no strength for the combat.

It is wonderful how in one moment the strong man becomes weak, and yields himself a hopeless prey to the old passion which had seemed

to be dead in his heart. The proximate occasion of sin is the gate of hell, the open door through which so many pass every hour to unending woe. The manacles and chains of the adversary are bound upon the poor sinner, and all his bright hopes of heaven are faded from his view. And there is even another consideration which gives a more startling view of this danger. It is mortal sin to expose ourselves to the temptation which we are sure we cannot resist, because when we foresee the consequence, and the exposure is voluntary, we will to commit the sin into which we allow ourselves to be led. He that places himself, without necessity, in the occasion of falling, has already purposed to offend God mortally, and is therefore dead unto Him even before the intention is accomplished. He goes to the stronghold of the devil, and the bands of death are already about him, and what shall prevent his overthrow? As the dead body has no power to resist external violence, so the dead soul is without strength to cope with the adversary. And should death overtake the sinner while on the way to an occasion of sin, his soul is lost without remedy, since his last act was the deliberate choice of sin.

These truths need no illustration. The man who has forsaken an evil companion, and has for long years perhaps sought the favor of God, now turns his steps back to the object of forbidden love. By this very act he forsakes the love of holiness, and throws himself into the arms of the tempter. Who does not see the grievous nature of his ingratitude? and who cannot tell how surely and certainly he will fall into the abyss opening before him? This is the art of Satan, to wake up an old passion, to play upon the weakness of the heart, and to dress an unlawful love in its most attractive colors. If he succeed in bringing the sinner back within the circle of these attractions, he has accomplished the work of death. God may send His angels to rescue him once more, and the shafts of death and affliction may come in time to save him, but he has no right to look for these extraordinary mercies. Once rescued, perhaps many times saved by the tender love of the good Shepherd, how can he expect again and again to be sought for, when for favors past there is neither gratitude nor obedience? The cross is a marvel of the divine mercy, but Calvary itself calls for vengeance upon those

who so many times trample under foot the precious blood. "For the earth that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth herbs, receiveth blessing from God. But that which bringeth forth thorns and briers is rejected, whose end is to be burnt."

III. The great question then before us is, how are we sinners to break the force of this temptation, and avoid the occasions of sin? And we are prepared to answer at once, that there is no way of dealing or compromising with this enemy. He cannot be overcome by meeting him in combat: we must fly for our lives, and escape from his power. The occasion must be cut off, and without delay. There is no other hope for the soul. The sinful object must be put out of our sight, and the evil companion must be forsaken forever, and the place where we have been betrayed must be closed against us till the hour of death. If the offending member be a right hand, it must be cut off: if the right eye be full of death, it must be plucked out. Hard as is this work, it is the test of sincerity, and the only chance of life. When Lot fled from Sodom, he was forced to run to the mountain, and not even to look back,

lest the avenging fire should overtake him also. Many are the reasons which prove the necessity of at once and utterly forsaking all sinful occasions. There is no possibility of amendment while the strongest chains of the devil are about us. How shall a man cease from sinning while he embraces the temptation by which he has fallen? Will any one say, I will sin no more, although I cannot give up the company of my accomplice; I must still love, although no longer in any way to offend God? Will the drunkard tell us that he can put limits to his unnatural appetite, that he can for the future go unharmed into the dens of vice and intoxication? Even reason will rebuke the hollowness of such professions, and teach us how short a time such resolutions will last. Deeper falls will come, and more shameful sins will multiply themselves. Impure affections blind the eyes, and the will staggers. We propose to go only so far, and behold, before we know it, we are over the precipice; the great evil is committed, and all energy to arise is gone. To forsake sin, and still retain the occasions, is an utter impossibility. The brain itself is on fever with passion, the eye cannot see sin in its true colors, and the

heart, foolish and wayward, is led a willing captive.

Besides, with all true sorrow for our iniquities there must be a sincere detestation of the sin we mourn; and without this hatred there can be no contrition which God will accept. There may be a momentary emotion, a sense of the evil consequences of transgression, and even a fear of judgment, but there can be no firm purpose of amendment. The Searcher of hearts is not deceived by any profession we make, and if there be not in the sinner a complete and radical change of purpose, his repentance is worth nothing. Mere natural emotions are often mistaken for the contrition of the gospel. But they will not stand in the hour of temptation, or in the day of wrath. The Church herself tells us that a true detestation of the sin we have committed is a necessary condition of pardon. Will any one, then, tell us that it is possible to repent, and still hug to our bosoms the sad cause of our great falls—that God can be loved while sinful affection reigns in our hearts? Are we so mad as to persuade ourselves that two opposite passions, love and hatred, can both rest upon the same object?

As well might we try to love and hate God at the same time, as to cherish and avoid the occasion of sin. For in spiritual matters, as in the affairs of life, there can be no compromise. If we seek for salvation, we employ all our energies for this great end; and if we sow not with our Lord, we scatter the seed of His word, and waste His grace. He that is not always with Him, is against Him. Hence it is that in the sacrament of penance the priest is not allowed to absolve any one in the occasions of sin. No matter how vehement may be the protestations of the penitent, or how abundant his tears, if he will not forsake the companion of his crimes he is shut out from the divine mercy. The sad path of vice must first be forsaken, before the blood of Christ can be applied to the guilty soul. What is it to cry out, My God, my God, have mercy on me, and still to continue in the mire and pollution of sin? Is it any thing wonderful that the poor sinner should sometimes tremble when the stings of conscience torment him, when the heaven is dark above him, and the earth is brass under his feet, when the terrors of death overwhelm him? But call you this repentance, when sin is still embraced,

when there is no purpose to abandon a guilty love, when nothing but fear prostrates the self-accused beneath the shadow of the uplifted arm of vengeance? Is it any thing for the creature to tremble before the Creator? The devils even, believe and tremble! No mere external grief will answer here, nothing less than the thorough change of the penitent from the ways of iniquity to the path of holiness. The sinner freely rebelled against his Maker, and freely, by the salutary way of penance, he must return. He must become a new man, with new desires, new hopes, and new objects of affection. To save the sinner while he clings to the temptations which have been his ruin, is an utter impossibility. The absolution would leave him still deeper in mortal sin, and as a curse would settle on his soul. Moreover, the renunciation of these occasions must be absolute and final. Never can the eyes rest again upon the forbidden object, never can the ears listen to the tempter's voice again. Once and forever the soul must be severed from the accomplice in crime, or the stronghold of vice. Old age, or a life spent in the practice of virtue, form no exemptions from this rule. The right hand cut

off, can never again be united to the living body ; the right eye plucked out, is put out for all eternity. The reasons which compel this decisive separation are always in force, and no length of time can destroy their binding power. Many, after years spent in penance, and after a life almost saintly, have fallen altogether from God, by returning even one moment to the old temptation. Even in the agonies of death, some have cast their eyes upon the forbidden object, and the suicide of their souls was the consequence. The drunkard may spend long years in temperance and virtue, but he can never trust himself again, for the hour of carelessness may be the hour of endless ruin. When the devil re-enters his heart, he will come doubly armed, with seven other spirits worse than himself. The sinner who once lost God by impurity, can never look again upon the object of his sinful affection. That unfortunate being must be blotted out of memory, if possible, for the soul will never be strong enough to even think of the guilty past. There is the weakness of the heart, and its private spring of bitterness. That unhappy love has still the power to tempt, and if it be allowed for one moment to come back,

it will come dressed in beauty, and full of tenderness. It will appeal to sympathy, the snare of even generous souls; it will recall forgotten impulses, and will kindle the flame which had seemed extinct for many long months.

What, then, dear brethren, are we to do? There are perhaps few of us who have not at some time been ensnared by the occasions of sin. Some of us may be fast bound in them at this moment. We must fly for our lives, for if we rest where sin binds us, worse flames than those of Sodom will overtake us. Now, the bands must be broken. God, who calls, will give strength, and the energies of His sacraments will give us power to burst the most dangerous manacles of Satan. Run to the tribunal of penance, and expose the secret malady that eats away all spiritual life. Tears of contrition will cure the fever of concupiscence, and the blood of Christ will give soundness to the disordered brain. There is no time to be lost, for who knows how soon the shades of death will settle around the captive? Strong, unflinching resolution will save; resolution to suffer every torment, even to die rather than turn back to the way of crime. Could God ask

any thing less than this? And the poor sinner does not come up alone from the pit of pollution. Many are the prayers of those who, like him, were once in that dismal captivity. The holy Church has sought him, and bears on her bosom his cares and fears. Good angels are guiding his trembling footsteps, and saints in heaven are interceding for him. But why do I speak of angel and saint? Mary, blessed mother of mercy, holds out to him the arms on which were pillowed the Word made flesh. And above all, Jesus comes with the hands which were nailed to a cross, and sustains, leads, and cheers the penitent in the path of contrition. Who could ask for more mercy, or conceive of tenderer love? The same Power which woke the universe from nothing, and with one touch of His hand filled the heavens with countless worlds, is the strength and hope of the lost and ruined. And if, through grace which we can never estimate, we have been set free from the occasions of sin, let us persevere, watching and fearful lest we fall again, or for one instant forsake the ancient truth and the unchanging beauty. Alas, too late have we known the attractions of this beauty, ever old

and ever new. Let us keep our eyes steadily upon it, and the false glare of the world will seduce us no more; the fading charms of the creature will lose their power to excite our passions. Great is the work of penance. It will never end till death subdues the last foe, and sets the captive free beyond the reach of any adversary. How sad will it be for us, if, once having known the sweetness of divine consolation, and the joys of holy purity, we turn back to expose a defenceless breast to the arrows of the old enemy! "The last state of that man becometh worse than the first." Thick clouds of woe settle upon the apostate, seven unclean spirits enter into the garnished chamber of his heart, and God and good angels leave him to his fate.

SERMON XIV.

ABUSE OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

“You shall seek Me, and you shall die in your sins.”—S. JOHN, viii. 21.

For the Season of Lent.

SAD and mournful are these words of our Lord. He had become incarnate for the salvation of guilty man; He had left the ninety and nine in His father's paradise, and had come to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: yet His own people rejected Him, heaped upon Him all manner of contempt, and even sought His life. They took the beloved Son of the Husbandman to the wall of the vineyard, to cast Him out forever from His own inheritance. Jesus was forced to leave them, and with great sorrow of heart He took His long farewell. To Him it was no loss of glory or bliss. They were to be the sufferers alone, and they knew not the abyss of misery into which they were plunging. “I go, and

you shall seek Me, and you shall die in your sins." The time shall come when you shall seek for Me in vain, when the hour of mercy is past, and you can no more find Me. You then shall die in your sins, because when I was near to you you would not hear My voice; when I was waiting at the door of your hearts, you would not let Me in.

Now, dear brethren, these fearful words were not spoken to the Jews alone. They apply to every sinner who at any time rejects Christ, to all who refuse His offers of mercy in the day of grace. At this time He comes to visit the Church, to call sinners to repentance, and to awaken dead and sleeping souls. He speaks to them through His word and sacraments, in the silent chamber of their hearts, and by the special providences which surround every individual soul. The Lord Himself is now in the tribunal of penance, where He has erected His mercy-seat, to pardon and cleanse the guilty and the vile. It is He Himself who speaks the forgiving word; it is He that through the agency of His ministers binds up the bleeding wounds of sin, and gives peace to the broken heart. We are all sinners, in great need of His help, and we

know where to find the great Physician. He never fails His own institutions: He is the invisible priest of His own sacraments. True faith discerns Him here, and knows his voice. It sees Him worn and weary, where flesh and sense see only weak and erring man. It sees the crown of thorns upon His head, and the blood dropping from His hands and feet. It hears that voice of compassion, "My son, thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace, and sin no more." But, alas! many see Him not; and many seeing Him, turn from Him and reject Him forever. He goes away, and they die in their sins.

The great truth, then, which by the aid of God's Spirit I seek to impress upon you to-day, is our great responsibility in the use of the sacrament of penance. Jesus Himself is the minister of this sacrament, and here He comes to apply the precious blood to the sinners who have defaced His image and lost their birthright. If we reject Him here, we shall never find Him; if we abuse His mercy here, we must lie down in everlasting darkness. We may wander through the universe, and seek a redeemer in vain, for our feet shall stumble upon the dark mountains, and the angels of God shall mock at our calamity.

I do not, however, speak to those who never draw nigh the tribunal of mercy, and are determined to be saved in their own way or perish. Catholics who come not to the fountain of life, choose deliberately the way of death, and separate themselves from Christ. What shall we say of them? Their names are already echoed in hell, and their record is written in the register of the fallen spirits. They are, to the eyes of men, moral and respectable; they hope to be reconciled with God at the hour of death, but the devil will not be so easily cheated of his prey. Their agony comes, and they seek the Lord whom they had rejected all their lives, and they cannot find Him. The poor soul expires, and the fangs of demons bear it to the everlasting fire. They die in their sins, and are buried in hell. But there are many Christians who frequent the sacraments, only to add sacrilege to all their other sins, only to crucify their God afresh, and heap up great mountains of blackness between their souls and heaven. Some confess often, and still continue in sin; while others have stated seasons in which to throw a little of their burden at the feet of Christ, and then to go back to vice. Some come with a lie upon their lips,

to cheat, if possible, the Searcher of hearts ; while others rush as thoughtlessly into His presence, as if He were only the sport of a passing hour. All these are in their degree guilty of the blood of the Lord, and the day shall come when every drop of that blood must be accounted for before men and angels. At this season, dear brethren, multitudes are rushing to the tribunal of penance. Do they go there to find their all-merciful Saviour, or to grieve and reject Him ? This is the great question which each one must answer to his own soul. Let us examine the conditions of a good confession, and by them judge ourselves in these days of grace. For any proper use of the sacrament three things are certainly required—a true conviction of sin, an open confession of all transgression, and an efficacious purpose of amendment.

I. The Lord has erected this tribunal for sinners, and they alone who feel the burden of their iniquities are the subjects of its merciful provisions. It is the plank thrown out to the shipwrecked mariner, the second baptism for such as have lost their innocence. It extends its aid only to such as are conscious of their ruined condition, and desire to return to their loving but injured Father. It is the door of the old

home, where that indulgent Father stands waiting to give the kiss of peace to his prodigal son. It is not the place to put on the cloak of hypocrisy, or the mask of self-deceit; to stifle the crying wants of the heart, or cover over the reproaches of conscience. It is a sacred, awful, and mysterious place, where the soul guilty of the foulest crimes may draw nigh its God; where the heart, emptied of its earthly love, may find an affection sure and undeceiving; where the tottering steps may be strengthened to tread in the way of perfection. We cannot go into that confessional, and come out the same men that we were. We have made an advance towards heaven, or have fallen back towards hell. A true sense of sin is therefore the first requisite, a real consciousness of our burden, and a desire to leave it all at Jesus' feet. This conviction of our iniquity is the lesson which destroys self-love. It portrays our ingratitude in moving colors, and makes the heart sensible of its misery in forsaking the living God. Self is arraigned at the bar of conscience, tried and condemned, and the culprit would be led out to execution but for the mercy of this sacrament. The Spirit points out to us the sins of our lives, and they

stand out in bold relief in the picture of the past. We see the whole of our devious way, the labyrinth of our wanderings, and the countless infidelities by which grace has been resisted. His hand touches these wounds, and they burn beneath the divine pressure; His probing-knife goes down into our ulcers, and they ache with the searching accuracy of His fingers. We throw aside every excuse of self, every palliation of our crimes; we confess ourselves guilty of the blood of Christ, and rush to throw ourselves on the ground beneath His cross. And here our hearts would break, if that poor mangled Victim, writhing in death, were not our very God; if from his bleeding wounds grace did not descend into our fainting and sickening hearts. We find strength to reach the height of Calvary; we go up that steep upon our knees, and stretch out our hands to hold fast to the cross; and behold, the poor Sufferer takes our burden on His own shoulders, and we are free. Compare, now, dear brethren, this imperfect picture of a true penitent with the reality which we see. How many are there, of the thousands who crowd around the tribunal of mercy, who are animated by such dispositions? Do they come oppressed

with the weight of their transgressions? Have they well examined their hearts, and do they even know their sins? Have not many come through custom, through fear, or through some unworthy motive? They have been waiting there perhaps for hours, and upon what have their thoughts been employed? They come into the confessional, where God is very near them, and what have they to say? Does not a dumb spirit seem to take possession of them, and to shut their mouths? The minister of Christ must question them, or they can make no confession; and even when he tries to assist them, their examinations have been so imperfect that they are very apt to answer him falsely. They speak of great, overwhelming sins, which ought to make them tremble with fear, as unmoved as the rocks which only shake with the earthquake but have no heart to fear their Creator. Speak to such souls of the tender love of Jesus and Mary, or of the undying fires of hell, and you cannot melt them. They are like the ice of the poles, which the sun only hardens, as his rays are reflected back from the cold mirror. They have come to do their annual duty, or their monthly task, and they wish to do it and be

over with it, and they are not disposed to thank the priest of God for troubling them. It is their custom, and this mere external duty is all their religion. Many receive the sacraments often, and make no advancement whatever in the way of life. They feel no burden in their daily infirmities, and forget far more than they confess, because sin sits so lightly on their consciences that it leaves no remorse behind it. What shall we say of these penitents? What have they done? They have done great injury to their souls, and have gone to the feet of Christ only to reject Him. It was not the priest whom they treated with coldness and indifference. It was Jesus Himself; and while His hands and feet were dropping blood in that confessional, His eyes were shedding tears. I died for you, poor soul, but all in vain; you come here with nail and spear to crucify me again. I go away, but you must die in your sins.

II. The second requisite is as absolutely necessary as the first. When the penitent comes oppressed with sin, it is easy to open the grief of a broken and contrite heart. The soul demands relief, and by itself can never bear its burden. If God had not provided some way of

consolation, contrition would react upon the physical energies, and sometimes be even fatal to life. There is no grief like this, which is made up of shame, self-confusion, a sense of ingratitude, and all the elements which crush even the elasticity of man's heart. And yet for such sorrow the world has no remedy. It mocks at the weeping sinner, and tells him to go, plunge deeper in vice, and to drown his conscience in still darker pollution. Friends, however dear, cannot come near the affliction. The fearful secret must be kept pent up, and it will eat like a canker in the brain, or, like the undying worm, gnaw upon the strings of the heart. Who is there but God who can see and know this greatest of all miseries, and in mercy can apply the remedy? So sits the good Shepherd, and through His ministers opens a compassionate ear to the tale of human woe. Here the prodigal comes and opens all his sorrows, tells every dark and wretched fall, every infidelity, every wandering, pours upon his God the whole weight of grief. And human sympathy is elevated into divine compassion, and with more than a mother's gentleness, the great Physician in His own way binds up the wounds of the sufferer, dries the

tears of the mourner, gives peace to the heart that was a very chaos of misery. Oh, dear brethren, happy would be the task of the confessor if such were the dispositions of his spiritual children. He would shed his tears with theirs, he would magnify the mercy of God, he would gain lessons of contrition from these earnest and loving souls. But when there is no sense of the burden of sin, there is no proper confession. Many things are untold, because they are not known; and they are not known, because there is no tenderness of conscience. There is no openness, no candor, and sometimes there seems to be a studied effort to make the acknowledgment of sin with as little cost as possible. What shall we say when mortal sins are concealed, and lies are told to the Holy Ghost; when not half of the misery is exposed; when the real malady is left to gather new strength? The priest of God cannot read the heart. He fears and trembles, he questions the penitent, and can gain nothing; he is almost sick with anxiety, yet he inclines to mercy; he raises his hand, makes the sign of salvation, and speaks the absolving words. The Master stood behind him, and looked into the secrets of that unfaithful

confession ; and the sinner goes out, having once more trampled under his feet the blood of salvation. Now, why does new darkness gather round that guilty soul ? Why does a film grow over his eyes, and the sound of many waters fill his ears, and blaspheming words rush unbidden to his tongue ? Why does passion kindle up with a new flame, and fierce inclination to evil hurl him headlong into new abysses of crime ? Alas, he is cursed of God. He is guilty of sacrilege. He took a poisoned spear, and he went to the home where mercy watched for the prodigal, and he thrust his weapon into the already open heart. Why did he go there ? Why did he seek his Saviour to insult Him anew ? Was not Calvary enough ? Ah, no ! the pierced heart recoils from the spear, and blood gushes out in vain. The sinner has rejected his Lord. The day may come when he would give ten thousand worlds for that hour of mercy. The lips that Mary so often kissed were full of benediction, and they would have even kissed his tears away ; but now it is too late. The Saviour has gone : you may seek Him, and you cannot find Him. You will fear, you will tremble, you will see dark and fearful days, but you

cannot find mercy except by a true confession, and you must die in your sins.

III. If, then, there be no conviction of sin, and no true confession, there cannot be any efficacious purpose to amend. It is worse than idle to talk of any conversion to God, when there is no grief for the past, and no disposition to open in the tribunal of mercy every secret transgression. The sick, who refuse the physician's aid, must perish; and even God Himself cannot save those who will not accept His grace. But sometimes we see the signs of sincere contrition, and the evidences of real grief. The heart seems to be broken, and the tears which flow are not forced by the deceit of a hypocrite. Every sin is openly and plainly confessed, without reserve and without the slightest shadow of concealment. As far as man can see, we could not ask for a more faithful accusation of self, nor a more bitter regret for past iniquity. Yet in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, the penitent goes back to the old sin, and sinks deeper than ever in the accustomed vice. Absolution of the past was freely granted, encouragement was given for the present, and bright hopes were kindled for the future. Even the body and blood of the

Lord became the food of that poor soul, and then, like Judas, he went out to betray his Saviour. Now seek him, and you shall find him bound hand and foot, sunk in the mire of vice, cursing the holy Name through which comes salvation, or shedding bitter tears of despair. Why is this? Did that penitent go to the feet of Jesus, really resolved to shake off all his shackles, determined to cut off forever all dangerous occasions, and to abandon every evil companion? Had he counted the cost? Did he see, on the one hand, the gratification of appetite and the raging flames of an eternal fire; and on the other, self-denial, the way of the cross, and the open door of paradise? Had he made his choice for eternity? Or did he seek a temporary relief for the wounds which made him almost frantic? Did the undying worm already begin to gnaw upon his vitals? Did the unquenchable fire already begin to burn in his heart, and did he seek only a drop of water to cool his tongue? Did he go and kneel down and weep, and confess his sin, and still cling to the object of unlawful love, still keep within him that passion, one spark of which would be his ruin? Alas, no wonder that he is unhappy, that he

weeps, that he wrings his hands, and cries out, "I know I will lose my soul; I am going to hell: I feel now its fire in my veins, but I cannot give up this sin. Help me, for God's sake, for I must be lost—I will be lost." Poor soul, the pinions of the unclean spirit are over him, the fangs of the tormentor are in his vitals, and all day long whispers of despair sound in his heart. A rough voice, the voice of the devil, speaks to him; "There is no more hope for you. God can never hear your sighs. You look to Calvary in vain. But see now, the kingdom of this world is mine; I will make its wealth to roll at your feet. Here is the object of your love. It has grown more beautiful since you turned your back upon it. Now take it and enjoy it, and think no more of sacrificing the present for the future. I saw you in that confessional, and I went there with you, and I heard you promise to give me up; but those were unmeaning words." And the unhappy prodigal rushes into the arms of his love, and sinks deeper than ever in the old vice. Did he really seek his Lord? No; the Lord sought him, and found him in his great misery, and brought him back to the fold of salvation on His own shoulders. His tender arms were round

about him, and His voice of mercy spoke to his heart. But when the trial came, the sinner rejected his Saviour, and tore himself from his arms. He preferred the pleasures of sin, the snares of his special vice, to the love even of his incarnate God. Now, soon the day of grace will be over. He shall seek that Redeemer in vain. He will call upon the mountains to cover him, and the rocks to hide him. He must die in his sins.

Here then, dear brethren, let us be sensible of our danger, and understand well who it is that seeks us in the sacrament of penance. It is our merciful Saviour, our very God. It is Mary's Son, whom we scourged and nailed to a cross. It is blessed for the penitent to get so near to Him, and obtain the assurance of His free pardon. It is the door of heaven to the contrite soul, the fountain of cleansing for the defiled and polluted sinner. When we get to His arms we have every thing, and know neither want nor care. He will take us up the steep hills, and present us spotless in His Father's courts. But if with suicidal hands we presume upon His grace, and seek the home of His mercy only to kill our own souls, seek Him only to reject Him, what

new grace can we expect? Another Calvary would not save us. If we will not now confess our sins openly and sincerely, and with a firm purpose of amendment, what special dispensation do we look for when the shadows of death overtake us, when the fires of divine wrath begin to burn around us? Oh, there is mercy abundant, and without end, for the true penitent. There is peace like a river for the contrite, and eternal joy for the broken-hearted. But for the abusers of God's last and greatest mercy there is no hope. When the earth quakes under their feet, and fear of eternity overwhelms them, they shall seek the Child of Mary in vain—they shall die in their sins.

SERMON XV.

THE VICTORY OF BLOOD.

“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, this beautiful one in His robe, walking in the greatness of His strength?—I that speak justice, and am a defender to save. Why then is Thy apparel red, and Thy garments like theirs that tread in the winepress?—I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the Gentiles there is not a man with me: I have trampled on them in My indignation, and have trodden them down in My wrath, and their blood is sprinkled on my garments, and I have stained all My apparel.”—ISAIAH, lxiii. 1-3.

For Palm Sunday.

THESE are the words of Jesus, the spouse of the Canticles, pure in His spotless beauty, and red with His own blood. They are the words of Him who wrought so strange a victory by yielding Himself as a lamb to His foes, and by dying brought immortal life to lost and ruined humanity. But what a strange victory! What a new manner of warfare! Victory springing from seeming discomfiture! Life flowing from death!

His own words declare the solitude of the conflict. "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the Gentiles there is not a man with Me. I have trampled on them in My indignation. I looked about, and there was none to help. I sought, and there was none to give aid." He our incarnate God was alone in that mighty work. On His torn and bleeding shoulders our help was laid. Angels stood by in reverence—motionless, because He held them still. "He took not the nature of Angels." They desired to look into the mystery of *God made man*; but wonder, and mysterious sympathy, overcame their pure spirits, and heaven itself was silent at the scene of Calvary.

And what could man do to help his Redeemer? *For man* that conflict was waged, to rescue man in chains, in darkness, in death. Men were the spoils of the adversary, and "he who had the power of death" was their Master; yea rather, men were His adversaries, those who crucified Him, those who pierced His hands and feet, those who pursued Him even unto death. His own people, the priests and rulers of His own nation, were His accusers and tormentors. Alas! "of the people, there was none with

Him." "He came travelling in the greatness of His strength," *alone*, bearing the sins of the world, and saving those who slew Him, whose ingratitude pierced His all-gracious heart.

Oh, how marvellous is this sight of God working salvation in the midst of the earth! How majestic His solitary conflict with the foes of darkness, the spirit and power of evil!

Yet was His conflict a glorious triumph, a victory reaching the lowest depths of hell, and towering to the throne of God. He "spoiled principalities and powers, and exposed them in open show, triumphing over them in Himself." "Through death, He destroyed him that had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil." He ransomed all mankind from the penalty of sin, and brought life and immortality to light,—became Himself the life of those who believe, and the resurrection of the dead. He went down to the bars of the pit, and brought up to the vision of God the patriarchs and prophets who could not find perfection but in Him: "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be perfected." He preached the gospel to the dead, and proclaimed salvation to the spirits in

prison. Throughout the whole dominion of Satan, He went triumphing as the universal Lord, leading captivity captive, and going *Himself—The Life*—into the regions of the shadow of death. “Thus did He tread down His enemies in His indignation, and trample them in His wrath. Their blood was sprinkled upon His garments, and all His apparel was stained.”

Yet, beloved, how wondrous was the manner of His victory! By suffering, He conquered. By yielding, He disarmed His foes. They vented their whole malice upon Him, and the hour of their seeming triumph, was the hour of their everlasting defeat. He was born of the spotless Virgin, but in poverty, obscurity, and lowliness. “He had not where to lay His head.” Men courted the rich and the proud. They despised their God, and sought to take His life, even from His infant years. He had raised the sick, healed the blind, subdued the devils. Scarcely a family in Judea, but could bear witness to His acts of love. At last they took Him in their hands, and He was passive beneath their violence. Yea rather, He went cheerfully, joyfully forward, saying unto His Father,

“Behold I come, as it is written in the head of the book—Lo! I come to do Thy will.” Then they seized the Almighty Lord, bound their Maker’s hands, mocked the King of heaven and earth, mangled the flesh which is the life of men, shed the blood which alone can wipe away sin, crucified their God! Between earth and heaven they lifted Him up upon the cross, till all His blood ran out, and His fainting life ebbed silently away. And this was the manner of His victory. Truly, O Lord Jesus, Thy passion is an unfathomed deep: angels trembled as they looked upon it. Men whose vile pollution it has cleansed, know not where to find enough of sorrow, praise, and joy. None but God can know its fulness. “All worthy is the Lamb, who was slain and has redeemed us to God, in His blood.”

But this wonderful conquest of the Captain of our salvation, brought in the new and mysterious way by which suffering is the path to victory; and meekness, charity, patience, are the weapons which subdue the power, the wealth, the learning of this world. When, as on this day, we see the only hour of seeming triumph which Jesus had among men, and know that

He went to suffer, that He made haste to shed His blood at Jerusalem, how do our thoughts go on to another scene, where the same Jesus stood forth the scorn of the fickle multitude, clad in a purple robe, wearing the crown of thorns, and bearing the reed in His right hand. The shouts of hosanna were exchanged for cries of "crucify Him," and the palm branches had given place to the tokens of derision, the abuse of Jew and Roman, Pharisee and publican! Jesus went up to fulfil His work, for His hour drew nigh, and "He was straitened until His baptism of blood was accomplished." Thus this week of weeks was opened by the voice of triumph, as empty in His omniscient ear as are the flatteries of an enemy. He knew what was before Him, surveyed every step of suffering; and while He rode upon the ass, and palms graced His pathway, He looked steadfastly on to Calvary, and nerved His emaciated frame for the agony He was approaching. He chose to conquer in His own God-like way, yielding up His life, and by death bringing in life.

And now, O Christian soul, that seekest conformity with thy Lord, and not thy own selfish

will, that wouldst only be like Him, learn here the lesson of patience which loseth nothing and gaineth all things, and follow the white and ruddy spouse of blood, and wed thyself to Him in an everlasting union. Thou art this week to follow Him in the steps of pain by which thy sins were washed away, and art to hear the tale of sorrow such as none other hath known, such as the universe hath but once seen.

Oh, if thou art in earnest, much grace is in store for thee. A treasure above all price awaiteth thee. He who conquered so gloriously once, doth every Passion-tide draw nigh to those who seek His truth and weep at His life-giving woe. Among sinners, He "travelleth in the greatness of His strength;" year by year, at this season, He cometh "red in His apparel, treading the winepress alone." He seeketh to espouse the hearts of His people, and leading out to Calvary, there to teach them to die to the world—there to quicken them to newness of life. And strange to say, His passion hath power above all to conquer sin, to perfect saints. On it the poor sinner clings, for though his sin be dark, that stream of water and blood can cleanse the vilest stains. On it hangs the

stronger life of him who has longer striven to subdue himself, for from it comes power to pierce below the deepest roots of sin, to dispel the darkness that hides from God, to let in upon the soul the full light of heaven. To Jesus crucified looks each true heart, and love is quickened by the sight, faith rests securely on His cross, and hope springs up anew and looks to a brighter world, where *union* with Him shall be unbroken.

So do we apply again those prophetic words to Him who year by year in His Church reneweth the memory of His passion, and worketh with especial power among all who really love Him, who really wish to save their souls. The Spirit and the Bride say *now*, Come; yea, whosoever will, let him come take the water of life freely.

And as this week we see the Saviour suffering, yet conquering, we shall learn to wait upon the Lord, and judge aright His dispensations. He leadeth His Bride "unto the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense." She, like Him, suffereth, and by suffering conquereth. She is *all His*, though men know it not—the very chosen of God—flesh of His flesh, and

bone of His bone: and often when she suffers, victory is close at hand; and depressed, she riseth with new life. Hated, feared, oppressed, she is yet Christ upon earth, still red in His apparel. She beareth His name, and hath His heart, and keepeth His truth. She cannot fail, though heaven and earth and all things seen shall pass away. She hath her portion of His sorrow to drink. Her children have to be purified, to be made white, to be tried in the faith. Her precious garners have to be cleansed of all that is vile, that she may be ready for the Bridegroom, clothed in linen pure and white, adorned as a bride for her husband.

And likewise with every individual soul, God's ways conform to this His rule. He leads His own through suffering to victory: casts them down, that He may raise them up: makes them feel the bitterness of sin, that they may prize the sweetness of His grace: shows them their painful weakness, that He may perfect them in His strength. Sorrow precedes joy: falls go before great victories: doubt only leads to the most blessed confidence in a certain faith. The Christian must not faint when thus God leads him, like His Saviour, to a conflict with his

foes. He doth not "tread the winepress alone." Christ is *in* him, and saints and angels are with him. There are many who, like a cloud of witnesses, inspire him on;—"they who have resisted unto blood;" "they who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" they who in heaven are able ineffably to see and hear the very substance of God, and God the Word, by whom all things were made. Of the people, the chosen people, there are many with him; and if he fails not, in the strength of Christ his victory shall be complete.

Sin and Satan shall be subdued under his feet, and with holy revenge, he "shall tread down his foes, and trample them in his fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon His garments."

These few words, beloved, will not be lost, if they only serve to put you in mind what it is we are approaching, what a blessed season of grace may now be ours. We may this week gain treasure to endure for all eternity: be drawn closer to Him whose cross now comes before us; find strength to fit us for death, judgment, even for a home with God. Shall we

gain all these—or lose all, and be lost forever? Answer this to Him who reads your hearts; and answer it by your use of this week, by the way you shall spend these approaching holy hours. How many more weeks like this shall be ours in this pilgrimage? Alas, the night approaches. Who hath his lamp trimmed and burning? Who waits with loins girded, to enter, at the Bridegroom's cry, into the chambers where He shall celebrate the marriage feast? He that is unmoved this week, let him not talk of religion. It is to him but an empty sound. The man who passes unfeelingly by His Saviour's cross, hath no religion. Let him not deceive himself with the name.

The day is coming, and draweth nearer every hour, when shadows must flee away, and realities must be met. Oh, for the sake of our souls, let us be persuaded to draw near unto Christ, earnestly praying that He would look graciously upon us, and give us what we most need, "broken and contrite hearts!" Else we shall be among those whom the Lord Jesus shall tread down in His wrath, and trample in His eternal indignation.

SERMON XVI.

THE INCARNATE GOD, A SUFFERER AND A
SACRIFICE.

“The Son of man indeed goeth as it is written of Him.”—
S. MATTHEW, xxvi. 24.

For Holy-week.

WE have arrived at the great week of our Lord's sorrows, and we stand upon the threshold of mysteries surpassing all human understanding. Our hearts have been purified by contrition, that they may worthily contemplate the steps of the Son of man, as He this week fulfils the prophecies, and accomplishes the great work of our redemption. Let us pray that every shadow may be banished from our souls, and every film of sense cast out of our eyes, that we may follow Him now to Calvary, and sympathize in His mysterious woe. This great week of sorrow is ushered in by a day of triumph, and the only day of triumph which Jesus ever

had on earth. He goes to Jerusalem for the last time, to give up His life to the hands of His enemies. He had been to the holy city before only to be despised and rejected. Now, as the great hour approaches, the multitude are moved by a sudden inspiration to welcome Him. He rides upon an ass, surrounded by His disciples, and far and near the shout of hosanna rings in his ears. Branches of the palm-tree are cut down, and strewed in the way, and the whole city comes out to meet Him, crying, "Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord : hosanna in the highest!" Wonderful prelude indeed was this to a week of ignominy and suffering. The Son of God was even afflicted by these loud jubilees, which should so soon be exchanged for the ruffian's clamor of "Crucify, crucify Him." The tender love of the Church repeats from year to year this triumphal procession, and all over the earth Christian hands bear the palm, in memory of this day. There is something beautifully touching in this ceremony, for the sign of victory is alike borne by saint or sinner,—by the devout who weep at the foot of His cross, and by the ungrateful, who come with spear and nail to crucify Him afresh. The Church will not let

His one day of earthly triumph die out of the remembrance of men. She will keep up the festivity, and welcome Him, who comes now from Edom, with His beautiful garments stained in His own blood. No human tongue can worthily speak of the mysteries of this week, and no finite mind can penetrate the depths of sorrow which it reveals. Not even Mary, who was nearer to God than any creature, and who suffered more than martyrdom in the death of her Son, could descend into the abyss of the passion. She was indeed the most exalted of created beings, and stood on Calvary a broken-hearted mother; but the victim was God Himself, whose ways surpass man's feeble intelligence, whose infinity nothing finite can approach. I desire, to-day, to enunciate one simple truth, which may serve as a key to unlock the wonders of these days, which, through divine mercy, will render salutary this awful view of the dying convulsions of the Lord of life.

The victim of man's malice is God Himself. The incarnate Word is the sufferer; and, on account of His divinity, this passion is a sacrifice of infinite value.

I. We shall indeed lose all the benefits of this

sacred season, if we forget the character of the Sufferer. We must keep in view every moment His great divinity, and fix our hearts intensely upon it, that we may adoringly follow Him in the steps of His abasement, and worship affectionately the bleeding Lamb of God. He who rides into Jerusalem is the Son of the Highest, before whom the highest archangels veil their faces, who will soon ascend to heaven with a gorgeous train of celestial spirits. What are all earth's honors to Him, and what could human praise add to His unspeakable glory? His feet are already anointed for burial, and the odor of the penitent's oblation still clings to His sacred garments. The fickle mob are soon taught to thirst for blood, and to accuse Him at the tribunal of the high-priest. He goes to Gethsemane, and prays, and retires alone, to drink the chalice which we prepared for Him. In the hour of utter desolation, His beloved are asleep. No one watches, as the traitor wends his way through the garden walks and the olive shades. Who is this that lies prostrate upon the ground, bowed down by an awful fever whose fire sends the blood to every pore of the skin, and causes the green sod to be crimsoned with

gore? It is our God! He is bearing the weight of our sins; your ingratitude and mine. Such desolation was never seen before. It is the desolation of the Eternal Son! See the traitor come with his band of ruffians, and kiss the lips still wet with blood. See the cowards fall, when He erects Himself in the majesty of His divinity. Now, as a child, He yields Himself, because the hour is come: and the hands which He created bind their Maker. They throw Him on the ground, they bind the rough rope around His waist, and they drag Him along with shout and jeer, to the house of Annas. It is the high hour of night, and the city awakes to insult Him, and young boys and tender maidens run after the mob to yell out their derision. They mock Him, and beat Him, and spit into His face, and drag Him again across the streets to the palace of Caiaphas. They bear false witness against the Innocent, and He opens not His mouth. They condemn Him to death, and He utters not a word. The disciples flee away, and Peter denies Him; and He weeps silent tears. They blindfold His eyes, and strike Him with the palms of their hands. The morning dawns, and they drag Him to Herod, when one miracle

would have saved His life. He has no miracle to work, but that of suffering. The soldiers array Him in a gorgeous robe, put a reed in His right hand, and press a crown of thorns into His brain, and mock Him with the laughing multitude. They bring Him to Pilate, and clamor for His crucifixion. The Roman governor sees no cause of death in Him, and proclaims Him innocent. Yet he seeks to satisfy their revenge, and sends Him to the pillar to be scourged. He is stripped, and bound with thongs, and the ruffians scourge Him till every bone of His back is exposed, and the sacred flesh and blood are scattered to the winds of heaven. He goes now fainting to Golgotha, bearing upon His mangled shoulders the two great beams of the cross. Who is this that thus comes from Edom? It is our God, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God! Created hands have bound their Creator. Human voices are loud in mockery or their Maker. The arms which are so unresistingly bound, bear up the weight of the universe. The face which they spit upon, is the face of God. The eye which they blind, is the eye of Love incarnate, one glance of which would bring all heaven into the most desolate soul. That coun-

tenance which they bruised with their blows, is lighted up with the exceeding loveliness and grace of the invisible God. They drag their Creator in His own blood. The cruel scourge is tearing off the flesh of the incarnate Word, the bread of life which came down from heaven. That bleeding form which meekly holds the reed, and wears the scarlet of their derision, is the King of kings, before whom one day every child of man shall stand for final judgment. See them beat their God with their clubs, when He falls under the cross. See them throw their Maker on the wood, and hear the sound of the hammers as they drive the nails into His hands and feet. Behold Him who made you, who holds your every breath in His hands, whose fingers will one day stop the pulsation of your heart—behold Him dying between two thieves, slain by His own creatures.

Ah! it is this which makes the passion so awful. The Word made flesh, the incarnate God, is the sufferer. This makes us tremble. This staggers our senses. This illustrates the divine love. This portrays our vileness. Even the rocks quaked, and were rent asunder; the earth shook upon her strong foundations; the

sun veiled his face from a world which crucified its God. Let man be mute this week with wonder, fear, and self-abasement. Let him adore in faith, where angels dare not look, and follow tremblingly the scenes of which the gospel preaches—the terrible realities, where Jesus, bound, crucified, dead, and buried, is the silent teacher. The passion will speak to his heart, if heart there be left—will open the fountain whence burning tears of contrition may flow—will melt the adamant of the sinner's soul.

II. Yet there is a further key to this great mystery. When God thus humbles Himself to ignominy and pain, it is for no transient purpose. The world could not crucify its Creator and still remain unchanged. The everlasting Life of all things could not die, and leave no effect of that wonderful dissolution. This great tragedy is for all time. The cross of Christ is the measure of all human things, and Calvary is the summit where man's wickedness and God's love meet together—where the stronger prevails, and the sinner finds pardon. The incarnate Word is a sacrifice for the sins of the whole human race. Innocent, and infinite in value, the Lamb is immolated, and divine jus-

tice is appeased. Mercy would forgive the guilty, but justice demands punishment. The eternal Son accepts the condition, and takes our part, bears our stripes, and we are set free. Here reason and revelation meet together, where mercy and justice kiss each other. The heart, convinced of guilt, fears the attributes of its Maker, and dares not approach Him without an oblation. Reason, from its first dawn, bears witness to man's need—tells him too plainly of the terrors of the offended Majesty of heaven, and gives him over to a salutary contrition. How shall the creature testify its sense of guilt and plead for mercy? He knows no other way than that of vicarious suffering. He must bring an offering, and the innocent must bear the punishment of the transgressor. Has the Most High pleasure in the blood of bulls and goats? Who taught the criminal this mode of satisfying the justice of an outraged Sovereign? The redemption of Christ, revealed to our fallen race in paradise, explains the mysteries of every religion the world has ever known. The bleeding lamb represents the crucified Son of God; and the blood which moistens the altar is only a type of that crimson flood which, like a foun-

tain of life, streamed from the heart of the Child of Mary. Without this, the sacrifices of our father Abraham were useless, the wonderful ritual of the Jewish church was an empty dream. Even pagan rites proclaimed this truth, which they had borrowed from primitive tradition, and to which the light of nature bore testimony. The hand of the Redeemer Himself framed the gorgeous ceremonial of the temple, and in every line and feature preached His own great immolation on Calvary. Man could not draw nigh to God without a sacrifice. Man had nothing worthy of the divine acceptance, and in utter desolation looked up to the infinite Goodness to supply his wants. Then Love became incarnate. The victims of the old law proclaimed His coming, and pleaded the virtue of His blood. In the fulness of time He came, fulfilled the types, put all shadows to flight, and offered the one sacrifice by which He perfects forever them that are sanctified. Jesus, the Lamb of God, slain on Calvary, daily offered on the christian altar, is the object of the sinner's faith, hope, and love. All things are centred in Him, who has reconciled us to God in His blood, and hath opened the new and living way of His flesh.

The school of Christ is here, and the cross is the teacher. All the lessons of self-denial and heroic patience find here their master, and the holy Church, the spouse of a bleeding Bridegroom, enters into His spirit of self-abnegation. Because we have sinned, we must forsake the looser ways of indulgence, and bind ourselves with the bands of discipline. We must watch, and fast, and pray, till we subdue the erring member, crucify the flesh, and cast out the body of sin. But this road of penance would be barren indeed, if He, whom we love, had not walked in it; if His footsteps had not hallowed its shadows, sanctified its desolation, and blessed its cold and heat, its hunger and thirst. Poor indeed is the gratitude which seeks not to imitate the tenderness of its benefactor.

The principle of expiation taught by the instincts of nature, revealed in the old law, and fully explained by the sacrifice of Calvary, is the key of the whole Christian system and its magnificent life of grace. The cross is engraved upon the regenerate heart. We have no offering to make for our manifold infidelities and iniquities. The Victim of salvation is put in our hands, and the incarnate God is our sacrifice.

We shelter ourselves beneath the cross; we unite ourselves to that great oblation, and with the infinite value of the saving Host, we send up to heaven our feeble sighs of contrition, our weak resolves, our little sufferings, our aspirations of faith, hope, and love. Without Him we are nothing; but in Him we are strong, the conquerors of death, hell, and sin. Hence the life of self-denial is the natural condition of those who call themselves followers of Christ. The ascetic principle is nothing but the imitation of Him, the desire to be in all things conformed to the supreme object of our adoration. If the soul seeks for perfection, it must find it in this path, in the new and living way of His bleeding flesh. It must take up its cross, and courageously follow where He has led. Suffering is the lot of sinners; but pain which His hands do not touch, is unblest. Sorrow, external or interior, which He sanctifies, is the sure road to illumination and union. We know not the maxims of the world. We triumph by submission, we conquer by suffering, and we are exalted by humility.

We come then, this week, to mount Calvary, and shut out the sounds of earth from our ears. Its follies have had too much of our time, and

have, alas, too much of our affection. We come to contemplate the great tragedy which the whole universe has but once beheld. God is the victim. The Creator is the sacrifice. We fly to the expiation of this oblation, and wash away our sins, and descend from the holy mount with the marks of the Lord Jesus in our flesh. We shudder as man, step by step, approaches the seat of the life of the incarnate Word, and puts forth his sacrilegious hand to stop the pulsations of the sacred Heart. But why is all this blood of the everlasting God poured out? and why is the dying agony of the great Creator lengthened out till darkness covers the earth, and shades of deepest night settle on the holy mountain? The eternal Son is dying for the sins of His own creatures. Say not simply this. Let us tell the truth, and say, my God is giving up His life for my sins; my transgressions are the nails and spear, and my wicked thoughts are the thorns which press into His brow. I am His executioner, and my life of disobedience has prepared for Him all these acute and unheard-of agonies. A cave was given Him for a birthplace, and a cross for His dying-bed. Let the sinner count up, one by one, the dark stains upon his baptismal raiment,

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and trace the devious way by which he has wandered from the home of his youth, to the utter ruin of himself and the grief of his Father's heart. The scene of Calvary will throw light upon his ingratitude, and teach him the bitterness of every infidelity. Here, penetrated with repentance for the past, he shall drink of the amazing love of God, and rise up in the spirit and power of that great sacrifice, to be himself an oblation, free and unreserved, to the mercy which sought and found him.

The Church has often tried to convert us to Jesus, and we have resisted her moving appeals. Now she brings us where no one dare speak. We are at the foot of the hill, where Calvary with all its horrors hangs over us. Yonder is the Victim, writhing in death. She points to the sacrifice, and utters not a word. The great High-Priest is the preacher, and His lips move not. All nature seems to be silent with awe. The earth seems to have paused in her daily and yearly course. The sun grows black at midday, and the stars refuse to shine. The numberless worlds that roll in space seem to have been checked in their march of ages. The sea heaves with groans, as if there were too great a burden upon its

bosom. For now God Himself is upon a cross, and the gloom of death gathers around the Author of life. We fear to mar, by a single word, the lesson of this great day. Here is a soul just rising from the misery of crime, with the robes of a penitent wound around her. She needs no interpreter to read to her the book of the passion. There is the Benefactor who found her in the desert, without a friend, starving in wretchedness and pollution. Peace was His priceless gift to her. She asked Him for food, and He gave her His own flesh. She was famished with thirst, and He poured out a chalice of His own blood. She saw the dark spots upon her once white garments, and He led her to the red Jordan which flowed from His open side. Will she need now a teacher when He hangs before her?

Here is another soul on which night has settled. There is no peace in that unquiet bosom. Yet why has he come to Calvary? He is not one of the Roman soldiers—he has no weapon in his hand. He has laid aside the tokens of iniquity. Mary's name is on his lips. He comes here to weep. A penitent thief has found the open gate of paradise. The divine Sufferer

sees him in the crowd, and though He speak not, His hands are stretched out, and waiting to receive him. He has but a moment more to live, for the last pulses of the sacred blood are beating out. He breathes out His spirit. The sinner falls prostrate at the expiring cry, and he lives because Jesus died.

Dear brethren, we add no more. We point once again at the cross. There is the one great lesson for saint or sinner, for every child of man.

SERMON XVII.

THE PASSION.

“It is consummated.”—ST. JOHN, xix. 30.

For Good Friday.

WITH what words, dear brethren, shall the Christian heart express itself on this day? We have come to the miracle of our redemption. We have followed the crowd, as thy were dragging the Lord of life to an ignominious death, and we are now on Calvary, to watch the amazing scene. A cross is before us, and on it hangs the Saviour of the world. They have pierced His hands and feet, and the nails hold Him on this His dying-bed. The hands that healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead, are fastened to the cruel wood. The feet that always went about doing good, swift as divine love upon errands of mercy, are pierced through with the hard iron. For nearly

three hours there has been darkness over the whole land.

The earth could not gaze upon the suffering of its Creator. The band of Roman soldiers are struck with awe, and retiring to a distance, wait to see the end. Now and then, in the gloom comes up the insulting cry to mock His agony, and Jew and Gentile blaspheme as death more and more gets possession of his Victim. Two thieves are hanging beside Him. On the left hand curses are coming from the tortured criminal; while on the right, the poor sinner begs for mercy, saying, "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom." We draw nearer to the cross. At its foot there kneels a penitent whose tears mingle with His blood, whose grief refuses all consolation, for He who hangs there is the God who brought life to her dead soul, who washed her from her defilement, and to whom she had given all the affections of her heart. The beloved S. John is there also, with his pure and virgin face, and standing like love's last sentinel on the mountain where the treasures of heaven are exposed to man's rude fury. He is not the same disciple that he was when he leaned his head on Jesus' breast: these

scenes have taught him new lessons, and he is crucified with his Master. Yet virgin purity and weeping penitence are only the attendants of the great Queen of all suffering souls. The afflicted mother is there; and she stands by the Sacrifice, beautiful, in her woe, as the tall cedar of Libanus when the storm rages and the wind beats upon the mountain. A godlike dignity crowns her queenly form, as the serpent whose head she crushed crawls upon the cross and plays around the dying features which he dare not touch. She knows it is his last hour. The fair face of the Virgin speaks the agony of her spirit, as the sword of Simeon goes through her heart; but she is the mother, and this is her Child, and she will assert her rights to the end. These are the only souls who have followed their Lord to "the mountain of myrrh, and the hill of frankincense."

Let the sinner look up upon the cross, and see the price of his salvation. From the sole of the foot unto the head, the crucified Saviour is suffering such pains as no mere creature could endure. Grief is depicted upon His adorable face; His majestic forehead is pierced in a thousand places; and if He try to rest His head upon the

cross, the pointed thorns of His saving crown are pressed still further into the substance of His brain. His hair is clotted with blood; His cheeks are livid with the blows of His ruffian tormentors; His eyes, languishing in the nearness of death, see but the insulting mob, while His ears, from which all human sounds are dying away, hear to the last their mockery; His mouth keeps silent; and His tongue, parched with fever, hangs out of His open lips. His shoulders have been torn by the scourge, and mangled by the burden of the cross under which He fainted seven times. His arms are dislocated by their cruel tension, and His hands, swollen around the nails that pierce them, bleed and ache with every motion, and His last convulsions tear the wrists from their sockets. Every joint in His limbs has been torn asunder, and the great spike which divides the tender nerves of His feet, holds fast the expiring Victim.

These are pangs which the eye can see, the external anguish which is painted upon the adorable body. But if we could enter the inner sanctuary of the Redeemer's soul, and follow the steps of its passion, we should see a far more awful grief. God is the sufferer, and the human

mind cannot measure the immensity of such woe. Who knew as He did the beauty and glory of His own divine character? Who could feel as He did every indignity offered to His sacred person? He is bearing the load of the world's sins, your sins and mine, the iniquities of every child of Adam. Alas! what penitent can bear his own sins, and not sink under them in the darkness of despair? Jesus takes all upon those bleeding shoulders. At this great hour, He sees every sinner for whom He dies;—the ungrateful, for whom all His anguish is in vain; the Jews, whom mercy cannot move; and all of every age who crucify Him anew and do despite to His all-atoning blood. The sorrows of His blessed mother are piercing His most loving heart, for He is the cause of the grief which overwhelms her tender frame. He can bear His own pains more easily than He can be the witness of her anguish. What would He not have done for that mother? But now He is nailed fast, and He can do nothing till the chalice is exhausted. He beholds the shadow of the cross extending down from Calvary, and resting upon the infant Church; sees how the disciples will walk in His blood-stained footsteps, and fill

up what is left behind of His sufferings. His life will not satiate the thirst of the adversary, for the world will array itself against His followers, and war unceasingly against the divine witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood.

While thus He hangs upon the cruel tree, He has not been idle. He has fulfilled every prophecy, even to the draught of vinegar and gall. He has prayed for mercy upon His murderers, has pardoned the penitent thief, and in all kingly grace has established in Sion the fair plane-tree by the waters, for the rest of the weary. He has made His Church the home and kingdom of His mother, in these affecting words: "Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother." Now, when all is done, and His last will and testament is made, He cries before heaven and earth, "It is consummated." The work is accomplished, and obedience will win its crown. The Son of God will die. Divine justice shall be satisfied, and heaven, by the sharp pang of death, shall be opened to all believers. "It is consummated," said the expiring Victim. I have not contented myself with the beginning of My painful course. The hardships of Bethlehem, the exile of Egypt, the toil of Nazareth, the privations of

three years of want, were not enough for me. I came to My own, and they received Me not. They cast Me out of the vineyard, they loaded Me with contradictions and insults. But I have never repented of My task. I have never taken one moment of repose, I have persevered to this terrible moment, and now I have but one more breath to draw. "It is consummated." The excessive agonies, the strange humiliations, the cruel tortures which I have endured, have completely consumed my life. It is necessary, therefore, that I now expire. I am bereft of all strength; My body is exhausted with blows and open wounds; My blood is all gone; My eyes are sinking in death; I cannot hold up My head; My spirit, in a deathly faintness, is leaving Me; an icy coldness is creeping over Me; My last moment is come, and I must die. Welcome, angel of death, and fear not to touch thy Creator, wrap your wings about the soul of your God, and bear Him to the paradise of the fathers, to the land of expectation, to the bosom of Abraham.

"It is consummated." As the Sufferer breathes out these words, joy seems to kindle on His gracious lips. Before those sinking, yet

all-seeing eyes pass in procession the host of angels and the throng of the redeemed, with the white robes of virgins, martyrs, confessors, and little children. They are going to the many mansions of the Father. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of the elect of God? It is God who justifies." Here is the ransom of the penitent. Here the stream which maketh glad the city of God. Here is the power to bind and loose, to remit and retain. Salvation is purchased for the contrite, and grace flows like a river around the habitation of the just. Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find. Here are the treasures of heaven opened, and he that gathers here shall be rich forever.

"It is consummated." But let us beware. Guilty Pilate washed his hands, but the stains of the innocent blood were set in them for all eternity. Words are of no avail on Calvary. Deeds of love and faith are needed to make sure your inheritance. You cannot touch this cross without repentance, without fear, without the restraints of a holy discipline. It will crush you to the earth, if you approach it with the love of sin in your hearts. You cannot abide under its shadow without devoted lives, without growing

holiness, without a willing self-sacrifice. To trust in your Saviour, while you are doing nothing, is to mock His agony. He that serves self or the world, and lives for the gratification of passion, has no part in His salvation. His holy and mortified life must be the pattern of our every thought, and the model of all our actions. The world has its own votaries, and must put its perishable wreaths upon their aching heads. The world has rejected its God, and to-day, as ever, wheels along its car of wealth, luxury, and pride. The crucified Jesus has none of its sympathy and none of its worship. Few are found to weep with Him on the hill of frankincense, to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. How long shall it be so with those who bear His name? How long shall the spirit of slumber weigh down all that springs up with such bright promise in the garden of God?

Yet, "it is consummated." God has done His part. You may go your way with Judas, and sell your Lord for money: you may prepare a new cross for Him, but you can never find another Saviour. There is no other sacrifice for sin; and when you have despised this oblation, you will seek in vain for altar or priesthood. The faithless

Christian must go to his long account, to be crushed by the crimes which look fruitlessly for redemption. Now you do not fear, while the light of life beams around you and your pulses are beating with the vigor of health. Wait but a little time, and darkness, like a plague, shall be your portion, when one by one the strings of the heart shall be broken, and desolation shall invade the home where your treasures have been nursed. You made your Lord cry out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and the time shall come when your spirit, bereft of every earthly aid, shall seek its Creator in vain. You have trampled under your feet the precious blood, and there is no other stream that can cleanse you. Now you do not weep, for tears are unknown to eyes which gaze on self alone. Soon your hour of anguish shall come, when the long day of eternity shall never set upon your grief.

"It is consummated." There are souls in mortal sin, who ten thousand times have refused to hear the voice which now can speak no more. The ruffian has sealed those lips, and they are cold in death. You have done this work. You have crucified your God. He came from heaven

to call you to repentance, and you stopped your ears, because He would have torn you from the pleasures of sin. He persevered, hoping still to win you, and with clubs, and scourge, and cross, you have silenced His appeal. He can say no more, for you have killed Him. Yet look up at the work of your hands, and see if your soul will not be stung with remorse. Take time to think of what you have done, and perhaps the sight of your God, dead upon the cross, will meet your heart. He will save you even now, if in contrition you will seek those cold and mangled feet, and there, with Magdalene, confess your crimes. Your redemption was effected by that death, and heaven is open for you, if in penitence you will tread in the path which He marked out in His own blood. Angels stand amazed at this bounty. The silence of awe and wonder checked the music of the seraphs, till the Holy Spirit had taught them the new song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor and glory, and benediction."

"It is consummated." When the lips of the Master are closed in death, the disciple cannot speak. The priest but points to the Victim

which every day he offers to the Father. Come with the holy women, and watch Him here ; come and kneel before the dead body of your Lord. Bring hither your costly spices, for He must soon be prepared for burial. Offer Him the exercises of your repentance, your tears for past ingratitude, your purposes to lead a stricter life. Give Him your love, and drive out of your heart every affection which usurps His throne. Profess before men and angels, that in Him alone you trust, that He is your only hope for time and eternity. Let this be the home of the contrite till the redeemed sinner, like his Lord, shall give up his spirit, and resting upon the cross, shall safely pass the waters of Jordan. Here is the shelter from the noon-tide heat, and from the winter's cold, the resting-place of the weary exile, till Eden, with its fair flowers and living streams, shall be opened upon his longing vision.

“Soul of Christ, sanctify me ;
Body of Christ, save me ;
Blood of Christ, inebriate me ;
Water from the side of Christ, purify me ;
Bloody sweat of the face of Christ, cleanse me ;
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O, Good Jesus, hear my prayer :

Let me never be separated from Thee ;
In the hour of my death call me,
And place me near to Thee,
That, with the angels, I may praise Thee
For endless ages. Amen."

SERMON XVIII.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

"You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; He is risen, He is not here."—S. MARK, xvi. 6.

For Easter-day.

THESE are the words with which the angel greeted the holy women; the salutation which sounds in our ears on this morning. The Son of Mary, who was crucified and consigned to the tomb, has risen from the sleep of death, and we seek Him in vain at the sepulchre. He is not there. The first light of the dawn broke the seal of Pilate, and rolled away the stone from the door. The guards were terrified at His approach, and fell down as dead men. The angelic army became the guardians of His grave. He arose immortal and glorious, having completely overcome death, and being Himself the first-fruits of the resurrection. The whole earth, which had been shrouded in grief at His cruci-

fixion, now welcomes the Conqueror to the trophies of victory. Joy pervades the universe. The sun comes forth with unusual splendor, and scattereth his beams over mountain and valley. The trees of the forest erect their heads with pride, the flowers smile, and the birds of the air carol a more joyful song. The rivulets leap gladly into the sea, and the great ocean sends in its chorus of praise. All His works glorify Him, and tell out His magnificence. Man, whom He redeemed, awakes from a long night of doubt and fear. The elder saints are startled in their graves, and catch the power of His rising, and ascend from the dust to join the triumphal procession.

We have watched at the sepulchre to see these wonders, and our hearts are transported with joy, as the splendors of His resurrection lift into higher ecstasy the holy mother, overwhelm the Magdalene, and comfort the disciples. We rejoice with them, and know not how to express the gladness of our whole being. Our sympathies were with Him, when for our sakes He gave Himself up to the tormentors, when He hung lifeless on the cross, when He lay cold in the grave. Now that His sacred humanity

obtains its reward, we are filled with thanksgiving. The holy body, torn and marred by man's violence, receives again the glow of health, and the blush of its former beauty. For ignominy, it receives honor; for pain, glory; for death, immortality. The very wounds become suns of light, and the scars gleam with celestial radiance. It is the same flesh and blood which He took of Mary, but it wears the divine splendor, and rising above the laws of matter, has put on incorruption. Now, for every insult there is a recompense. Each blow or torture claims its reward on this day; and as the Virgin Mother seeks for every mark of the scourge, or thorn, or nail, she adores the justice of God, which makes such strange beauty to bloom out of suffering. We should be altogether without hearts, if we failed to rejoice in the triumph of the sacred humanity.

But when Christ arose, He broke forever the power of the grave, and subdued the great enemy of man. In His own person, the representative of the new race, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, He prevailed in a contest between life and death. The tempter came to our first parents, and with his deceit overcame them. "By a man came death," and in Adam we all

died. The Son of God in due time came to the rescue. The adversary drew near to him, and was confounded. Death was his last weapon, and the skilful deceiver reserved his arts for that hour. A cross was prepared, with agonies unknown. The second Adam met him on Calvary. It was near the very spot where our first father fell. The stronger seemed to yield to the weaker, but His submission was His perfect victory. The devil was despoiled of his last weapon, and hopelessly ruined in the conflict. His quiver was spent, his last arrow was in the breast of the Lord of life, and he was unarmed. "As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, Jesus also Himself partook of the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil; and might deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to slavery."* As Christ was then our representative in this contest, we are likewise the sharers in His triumph; and our joy is not only on account of His glory, it is also on account of our regeneration.

Let us meditate for a moment upon this victory and its consequences to ourselves.

* Hebrews, ii. 14.

I. It is certain that Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Mary, died upon mount Calvary, crucified between two thieves. It is also certain that on the morning of the third day He arose from the grave. Even profane history attests this fact. There were many witnesses of his death, as He suffered publicly, at the demand of the Jews, and by the violence of His enemies. There were likewise many credible witnesses of His resurrection. There was a guard of Roman soldiers around the sepulchre, and the door was sealed by the governor. These watchers bore disinterested testimony to the verity of His rising again; for it was to their shame that they kept vigil over the dead, whom the tomb could not confine. The disciples, who knew Him well, were with Him, and ate and drank with Him, and their evidence is beyond all reproach. Revelation, indeed, affirms the truth of the resurrection; but we do not depend upon inspired Scripture for the proof of a miracle known and seen by so many witnesses. Facts attested like this, enjoy a certitude which needs no argument. Other miracles were wrought in confirmation of the apostles' doctrine; and each succeeding interposition of God, adds force to

the evidence by which they preached everywhere "Jesus and the resurrection." The Christian Church owes its existence to the labors of the risen Lord, and its perpetuity through all times is one continued miracle. If Christ had not risen, there would have been no throne of S. Peter, no apostolic commission, and no organization of the faithful into one body. The Catholic Church is immortal, because she partakes of His life; and her countless altars at this day are proofs irreproachable of the resurrection of her Founder. No human hand could have fashioned her features, and no finite power could have preserved her in the midst of every opposition, and against enemies both spiritual and earthly. No fact in history has such evidence as this, of which we have only given the outline; and hence they who deny the resurrection of Christ, are driven by consistency to deny every event of the past, and to close their ears to all human testimony. And when Jesus rose, He took again the same identical flesh which He had united once for all to His divine person. There was no other body which He could assume, for it were a contradiction that He should become twice incarnate. That very body which was formed of

Mary's substance, was the offering on Calvary, and is now the victim of salvation, in heaven and on earth. It is also the bread of life, the food of our souls and bodies, the manna which preserves the faithful unto eternal felicity. In the resurrection it took the characteristics of a spiritual body: "Mortal put on immortality." It became impassible, for it had well merited its freedom from physical pain; agile, that the laws of matter might no longer control its obedience to the soul; and luminous, that it might be filled with the glory of the incarnate Son of God. His face was brighter than the sun, and His eyes than a flame of fire. And yet these changes affected not the identity of His body any more than did the transfiguration, which opened upon the wondering disciples the true majesty of their Master. The Word of life, the eternal Creator, was laid to sleep for a few hours in the grave, but He came forth as if refreshed by His rest, and clothed with the light in which God ever dwells.

II. The consequences of this resurrection are equal to the dignity of the subject. When God lay lifeless in the tomb, it was easy to know that His will would be the re-

And when He arose, His mighty arms encircled the earth, and nothing could resist their power. He took the bars of the pit, and broke them to pieces; He seized captivity itself, and chained it to his triumphal chariot. He cast the brightness of heaven upon the valley of the shadow of death. He trampled upon the enemy, and cried out, O grave, where now is thy sting? O death, where thy victory? The whole creation felt the impulse of His rising;—the inanimate world, which awaited its day of redemption; the living souls, which were quickened by the life that He brought from the tomb; and the dust of those who died in faith, which was thrilled by the virtue that went out of His flesh. Life was the consequence of His victory, the justification of man, the regeneration of the soul, and the resurrection of the body.

Our race was dead by sin original and actual, and unable to seek or find reconciliation with its Creator. The soul had lost by the fall the divine light which illumined it, and had become the victim of passion and evil desire. It stood, with all its natural qualities unimpaired, a frightful wreck of what grace had once made it. Natural virtues, however brightly they might

bloom, could not take the place of those celestial fruits which had blossomed in the garden of Eden. Intellectual light could never fill up the void which was left in the human spirit when the Author of its being withdrew Himself. Darkness fell upon the understanding, perverseness fell upon the will, and gloom weighed upon the heart. The soul was separate from God, who is its life, and therefore spiritually dead. It could not be at rest, for no intelligence is in peace when cut off from communion with its Maker. As well might the planet march in its accustomed orbit, if thrown out of the attraction of its sun. Physical life is not the life of the soul, for that active power within us, which was made in the image of God, has no proper end of existence without Him. The fallen man is well conscious of this truth, and well convinced that no mere philosophy will bring him to the centre, where tends every high or intellectual action. Sin darkens still more the spiritual faculties, drives even reason from her throne, and converts the aims of our superior nature into the captives of animal passion. Men, with all their great endowments, become little better than the brutes. Two things were needed to release our race from

the sad effects of iniquity. We required pardon for the wrong done to the divine Majesty, and strength to shake off the chains of sin, to awake from the miserable bondage of passion, and to find real union with our Créator. The resurrection of Christ effected all this, and gave us freedom in soul and body. The sufferings of the cross paid the debt which we owed to the justice of God, and gave the Conqueror over death the right to scatter gifts among the unjust. He rose again for our justification, ascended on high, and sent down the Holy Spirit to replace the favors of paradise, to dwell in the believer, and to make him really acceptable before Heaven. The power which brought the flesh of Jesus from the grave, awoke the sinner from his burial in sin, gave him strength to rise up a new man, because of new grace, which enabled him to drive sin out of his heart, and to do works strictly meritorious of reward. Justification, for which Christ died, is no empty name, no mockery of man's great need. God does not call us by names which are untrue, for that would make Him a liar. If the righteousness of the Redeemer were confined to His own sacred person, and did not overflow to us, we should be still in

the mire of iniquity. We need a mighty grace to operate in us, that our wills may really take hold of it, and with it travel upward and homeward to God. In regeneration, which is the effect of Christ's resurrection, our souls rise with Him. We become new creatures, because animated by new and deathless power. Grace is to the soul, in the supernatural order, what the breath of life is to the body. It is our faith that we live in Christ, and that, "because He lives, we live also." And when we assert this central truth of our religion, we wish to be understood in the most literal sense. As the Son of God lives by union to the Father, so we live by union to Him. We are baptized by one spirit into His body, and we are nourished by His flesh and blood. "He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me."* His sacred humanity, which was so triumphant over death, becomes the principle of our life, and by its virtue we are conquerors over sin and the grave. Its touch quickens us, and we rise in the likeness of the second Adam, no longer the children of the curse, but inheritors of a new paradise, which far exceeds the delights of our lost Eden.

* S. John, vi. 58.

There is a conflict still between life and death. The regenerate soul has to war with evil desire, and, by continual resistance to temptation, vindicate its right to a share in the conquest of Christ. We rise with our Lord, but not to idleness, nor to a crown which we have not won. The battle is before us, and it will continue, and perhaps grow more furious, till the hour of death. It will not frighten us, since we have put on the strength which no created arm can subdue. Our souls have put on immortality ; not the immortality of mere being, but the spiritual life which will grow, and increase in vigor, until it is lost in Him who is being necessary and immutable. Trials will only develop the power which God has given us. The soul will run through all the stages of growth, freedom from the shackles of past sin, purification, victory over concupiscence, illumination, union with the supreme Good. The progress may be painful, but so is every true advance in perfection. "The seed is not quickened except it die." By its combats the soul will learn lessons, which will more and more detach it from earthly things, and lift it towards its Creator, its beginning and end. And however dark the sky may

be, the state of grace has its own light, which no violence can extinguish, for that light is nothing less than the presence of God. Unseen, often unfelt, the great Creator is with us, guiding our steps, holding us firmly when we walk upon the precipice, protecting us in the hour of danger with the shield of His own infinite being. The just man, who preserves the grace of his new birth, can never fail. The resurrection of Christ will have its effect. The earth casts out the dead. The dry bones come together, and we are clothed with muscle and flesh. Virtues, which are celestial fruits, bloom in the once barren heart, and the spirit with its intrinsic activity mounts upward, never to stay in its flight, until it reach the eternal throne, and gaze upon Him who alone is light and truth. What human language can tell the beauty of the soul which, disdaining finite joys, trampling upon its own passions, puts on angelic pinions, and hastens to the arms of its Father and Redeemer? Earth has no such beauty. It has grace in its valleys and streams, loveliness in its flowers, and majesty in its mountains and seas. What are these things to the power of intellect which can read them? And what is mental strength to that

spiritual vigor which, over all the weakness of the creature, makes a constant ascension towards God?

The body has its conflict with the adversary. "The enemy, death, shall be destroyed last." Disease lays his finger upon the upright form, and it stoops at the touch. Comeliness passes away, and manly force is gone. The strong man is a child again. The spirit flees from the disordered tenement, and corruption begins its work. The fairest face shall only feast the worm; and the brightest eye grow dim, when the king of terrors comes. Yet the Holy Ghost calls that dissolution of the just a sleep in Jesus. That wondrous change, by which dust returns to dust, is to the All-seeing Eye a refreshing rest. Why is it a sleep, except that the flesh shall one day awake again, and arise with new vigor? Why is it a sleep in Jesus, except that the corrupting flesh is really united to the body which the tomb could not hold? "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them who have slept through Jesus, God will bring with Him." "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last

day." The seed dies to be quickened. The body moulders in dust to awake free from every evil desire, to put on incorruption, when the voice of the Resurrection and the Life shall call it to blessedness. The glorified humanity of Christ shall be the actor in that hour. "Behold, I and My children whom God hath given Me."

It is then meet and right on this day to praise the work of grace, and to extol the magnificence of the plan of salvation. All the divine ways are perfect. The triumph of the second Adam is our complete victory, and as He this morning goes up from the grave, heaven, with all its felicity, opens upon our vision. Let the penitent dry her tears. Magdalene has seen the Lord. Now it is time to forget the past, and to press forward to the things that are set before us. Let pure affection be kindled in the heart that loves only the Child of Mary. S. John has been in the sepulchre, to see the stone on which He lay. He will remember our iniquities no more. The bright future is ours. There is no more light and shade, for the risen Son of God goes with us, and His transfigured humanity is the candle that illumines our whole being. The

celestial city is open at our approach, and the light that gleams from its towers already encompasses our steps. The Jordan that rolls between us and our home shall be to us as the dry land. Where the ark of God has passed, we shall follow without fear. Jesus and His children shall go in to their eternal rest.

SERMON XIX.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

“And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side.”—S. JOHN, XX. 20.

For the First Sunday after Easter.

THE whole paschal time should be a season of uninterrupted joy. The days of weeping are over, and even the penitent should lift up his heart to thank God for the gift of pardon, and the hope of perfect victory over sin. Jesus Christ is the Life. He hath overcome death and brought immortality to light; and “because He lives, we live also.” He is the life of the body as well as the soul. His triumph over the grave is not only the regeneration of our spirits dead in sin; it is also the resurrection of our flesh. The grace of redemption touches our whole humanity, reclaims the soul from its bondage to iniquity, and lifts our mortal frame from the corruption of the tomb. The Son of Mary, who

ascended in our nature, draws His elect after Him, to the participation of His glory, even to His likeness. "We shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is."

Let us reflect for a few moments upon the article of our faith, by which we profess the resurrection of the body. It is possible that we may have entertained vague notions of this truth, and the consequences which it involves; and in an age which denies it, or explains away its force, it is well to refresh our minds with the clear statements of revelation, and the proofs which are so abundant to sustain our creed and silence the unbeliever.

I. The Church teaches us that our bodies shall rise again at the last day, in accordance with the express promise of her Lord, and in consequence of His victory. A resurrection is therefore no new creation, but a reproduction, by which the same thing that died lives again. God might clothe the soul with another body, but this would be no resurrection. We die, and our flesh corrupts and is turned into dust. Our own eyes are witnesses of this dissolution. Faith tells us that this very flesh shall one day be restored and united again to the soul; that

the identity of the glorified body is as certain as that of the beatified soul. As we are to see God by our spirits, so our limbs, and members, and features are to be lighted up with His glory. We shall be changed, at the great hour when the trumpet of the archangel awakes the dead. Our bodies shall be spiritualized and lifted above the laws which now govern matter; but the life that shall quicken them, shall in no wise destroy their identity.

II. As for the proofs of this simple yet momentous truth, we frankly confess that it is above reason. The human intelligence might indeed arrive at a conjecture so strong as almost to persuade the doubting, but it could not absolutely establish the resurrection. It is well known to every thinking mind how much mere nature can do to read what the great Artificer has painted upon His works. The earth, the air, the starry sky, the open sea, are the wonderful book on whose pages His fingers have written. The human soul, with its intrinsic activity, is more majestic than all the creatures which it gazes upon. Starting from the intuition of necessary being, connecting the finite to the infinite, it goes on to conclude its own immortality, to gather

the particulars of its future state, to reason out even a final retribution. And on this pinnacle, where thought looks into the land beyond the grave, it might well startle itself with the conjecture that the flesh, which forms part of man, could not perish forever; that the members in which the free agent has sinned, should have their part in his punishment. Yet perhaps even here it would only catch the light of primitive revelation, and bear its testimony to a universal tradition. For proof of our doctrine, we have simply to say that God has so taught us, and that His word cannot deceive us. The resurrection was the hope of patriarchs and prophets. Its cheering confession passed even beyond the bounds of the covenant. Hear holy Job, as he sat in sackcloth, covered with a putrid disease which anticipated the loathsome corruption of the grave. He looked upon his wasting flesh, and raised his eyes to heaven. The worm was already eating his body, and yet he cries out, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God; whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another:

this my hope is laid up in my bosom.”* Our blessed Lord Himself has spoken in the plainest words: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day.”† So the apostle unfolds the teaching of his Master: “By a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead. And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. It is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body. For this corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality.”‡

The identity of the resurrection body is necessarily contained in this revelation. That only can rise which has fallen, which has been sown in dishonor. The soul has passed its judgment, and its eternal destiny is fixed at the hour of death. A new body, created for its habitation, could not be raised from the dust. The identical corruptible must put on incorruption; and

* Job, xix. 25-27. † S. John, vi. 53-55. ‡ 1 Cor. xv.

that mortal which mouldered in ashes, must put on immortality. At the last day the graves are to be opened. "The hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves, shall hear the voice of the Son of God." But what is in the tomb save the body which died? And why are the graves to be rifled, unless to bring forth that which slept in dust, even the very body which was buried? At the general judgment we are to give account of the deeds done in the body, and to enter upon an eternal reward or punishment. The whole man is to be recompensed with the joy of heaven, or consigned to the flames of hell. "In my flesh I shall see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." "God can destroy both body and soul in hell." The members in which we have sinned must take part in our chastisement; and the flesh which we have subdued, must participate in our eternal bliss. And let mere philosophers say what pleases them, they can never preserve the completeness of man after death, without the restoration of his identical body. We are not wholly spiritual, we are composed of matter and spirit; and the soul is not the man. The body must be restored, or the man as he was on earth

ceases to be. Clothed with strange flesh, he would suffer a change destructive to his identity. We who die and sleep in the ground, are to awake with a full consciousness of ourselves, and all that has happened to us. Memory is to be a principal ingredient in the felicity of the just, and the desolation of the wicked. If this were not so, we should undergo a kind of annihilation, and death would not only transfer us to a new state, but to a new mode of existence.

The examples of those who have been raised confirm all that we have said. The dead were by miraculous power restored to life under the old law, and they were brought back to earth in the full possession of all their natural functions. Our Lord Himself three times wrought this miracle, once invading the realm of death when the king of terrors had just claimed his prey; once lifting the dead from his bier; and once opening the tomb where corruption had begun its work. In these cases, no one could misunderstand the meaning of the resurrection, for the man who had fallen under the power of disease, rose up in the consciousness of his own identity. So shall it be in the latter day, when the prom-

ise of Christ shall break the bars of the sepulchre and deliver the imprisoned flesh.

But why need we any examples, when the resurrection of Jesus is the efficient and exemplary cause of our resurrection? The gospel of to-day records one of His many appearances to the apostles. He came into their midst, where they were sitting with closed doors for fear of the Jews. His body was no longer subject to the laws of matter, and yet He was known and recognized by all." He showed them His hands and His side," where were still the marks of the nails and the spear. He allowed Thomas to touch these wounds, and to thrust his hand into the open side. He ate and drank with them, and for forty days taught them the things pertaining to His Church. His body was changed, and was no longer capable of death. Yet it was the same identical flesh which He took of Mary, and it bore as ever the likeness of her beautiful features. It was the same body which Pilate nailed to the cross, which He promised to give for the food of the faithful. He is as certainly known by the disciples, as in the days before the crucifixion; and they followed Him to the Mount of Olives, and there caught the last glance

of His adorable face, when the clouds received His ascending form out of their sight. He was not a mere spirit communing with men, but true flesh and blood. "See My hands and feet," said He, "that it is I Myself; feel and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have." He took this body to heaven, and He still offers it for us before the throne, and on the altar, where He day by day renews the sacrifice of Calvary. As He was raised, so shall we be. We shall awake in His likeness. The apostle builds even the faith upon this verity. "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again; and if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."* The whole fabric of our religion stands or falls with this truth, for if the Son of God had not conquered death, He had failed in the promise which was to be the test of His mission: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."†

We look then at the flesh, which is a part of ourselves, and which is as dear to us as our very being. It is burdened with infirmity, languishes often under the violence of disease, and has-

* 1 Cor., xv. 13, 14. † S. John, ii. 19.

tens to the grave. It must lose all its vigor and beauty, and become the food of the worm, till dust turn to dust and ashes be mingled with ashes. Yet one day it shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and arise immortal. "In my flesh I shall see my God." These eyes shall see Him, as angels attend Him to the throne of judgment. These ears shall be startled at the sound of His words. This voice shall awake to praise Him, or to confess the justice of the irrevocable sentence. These hands shall help me rise from my grave, and these feet shall bear me to the tribunal of my Judge. If I sleep in Christ, I shall awake even as He did on the morning of the third day, clothed with light more glorious than the sun. The music of seraphim shall charm my bewildered senses, and Jesus shall behold me with a mild and cheerful face. I shall be myself once more. I shall live and reign where there is one perpetual day, where change is unknown. I am immortal. My whole being is redeemed. Well may we thank God for this hope which is laid up in our bosoms. It is the certain revelation of God, the consequence of Christ's victory, and the especial joy of the paschal season.

But there are to be two resurrections. There are those who will have no part in the triumphs of our Lord. There are those who will die in sin, and have no rest in the grave. "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach."* "The Lord Himself shall come down from heaven with commandment, and with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead who are in Christ shall rise first."† "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection. In these the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ." "Every one in his own order: the first-fruits Christ, then they that are of Christ, who have believed in His coming." "This is the will of the Father who sent Me: that of all He hath given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again in the last day."‡ The glories of Easter are renewed in the persons of the elect, and become their eternal portion. The earth quakes, the rocks are rent, the graves are opened, but it is the morning of an unending day. As angels guarded the sepulchre of Jesus, unwound the

* Daniel, xii. 2. † 1 Thess., iv. 5. ‡ S. John, vi. 39.

grave-clothes, and laid the sacred linen in its place, so shall these bright messengers wait upon our rising when we awake in His likeness. "I have slept, and have taken my rest; and I have risen up, because the Lord hath protected me."

Yet, "all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment."* The wicked shall be raised by the power of God to be the subjects of His vengeance. The very bodies in which they sinned shall live again, with all their memories of shame. They shall live forever. Eyes, and hands, and feet, and heart shall be "cast into the hell of unquenchable fire, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not extinguished, for every one shall be salted with fire."† We forbear to dwell upon the eternity of these unhappy souls, who have no share in the paschal rejoicing. The day of wrath brings them no redemption. Christ, their passover, was sacrificed for them, but they have refused the grace of that oblation. The blood of the Lamb was sprinkled upon their foreheads,

* S. John, v. 28, 29. † S. Mark, ix. 46, 48.

but they have trampled it under their feet, and now the angel of the second death fears not to claim them.

The picture of heaven is far more appropriate to the gladness of this season. "He took me up in spirit to a high mountain, and He showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." "And He showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street thereof, and on both sides of the river, was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no curse any more; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. And they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more: and they shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them, and they shall reign for ever and ever."* Thither our steps shall tend on that last morning when we have part in Christ's resurrection. In the possession of every

* Apocalypse, xxii. 1, 5.

faculty, with full memory of the past, we shall rest on the banks of that river, where there is neither sorrow nor death; we shall meet those who have gone before us, the saints whose examples and prayers supported the weariness of our pilgrimage. We shall see that blessed Mother whose care and intercession made her dearer to us than every thing but God. She was a mother to us in the days when we were guilty and wretched. What will she be to us now, when we have perfectly triumphed over sin? We shall even draw near the throne, and see the face of Jesus, whose beauty no imagination could paint. We shall look at the hands which were nailed to the cross, the feet through which the spike was driven, the open heart which no ingratitude could close. His eyes will look upon us, and their glance will send new bliss into our souls. "We shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is." We shall be enveloped with the glory of the most holy Trinity, and enjoy that beatific vision which is the end, the perfection of our being. Man can mount no higher, when he has come to union with his God.

Shall we not then be animated by these hopes

to turn from the things of earth, and to seek the joys which God has laid up for the just? Shall we not seek the "things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God?" Yet a little while, and faith shall be changed to sight. The grave shall claim us for its prey, and we shall sleep where we have consigned so many of those we love.

Let us so live that we may rest in hope. When we stand at the narrow portals of the tomb, little indeed shall appear the vanities of earth. Here then let us stand always, expecting dissolution, and accepting our penance of corruption, yet looking forward to our resurrection, when our scattered dust shall be gathered together; when bone shall be joined to bone, and sinew to sinew; when muscle and flesh shall cover them, and the soul shall retake its former habitation. Here we only begin our eternity. Then we shall enter upon that life for which we were created. May He who rose again for us, quicken us with spiritual power to rise with Him, and to live for Him alone. So the voice which opens our ears on the day of wrath, shall be the welcome call to unending blessedness.

SERMON XX.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

“I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.”—S. JOHN, x. 11.

For the Second Sunday after Easter.

IN these touching words, our Lord declares and predicts His pastoral office; to discharge which He had come on earth. He was to be a shepherd to those whom he redeemed; the good shepherd, in contradistinction to hirelings, who had no interest in their flocks. He provided pasture for his sheep at the expense of His life. His words are symbolic of that relation in which He stands to the regenerate soul, as its guide and support. All the members of the flock depend upon Him. He knows each one by name, and all are taught to know Him by the tenderest of ties. “The Lord is our shepherd; therefore do we want nothing.” “He hath brought us up on the water of refreshment. He hath con-

verted our souls. He hath led us on the paths of justice, for His own name's sake. His rod and His staff, they have comforted us." He died and rose again, that He might so lead us by the banks of the river of life; and the relation in which He stands to us is one of the fruits of His victory over death. Who shall overcome us when He is our protector? and how shall we fail in the hour of danger, when He provides for us? Let us then, with thankful hearts, contemplate the pastoral office of our Lord, the manner of its exercise, and some of its chief characteristics. The meditation will fill our hearts with gratitude, and a new sense of our obligations to Him who has saved us at the cost of His own life.

II. Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd. His pastoral office applies to our souls the salvation which He purchased on the cross. There, in blood, He redeemed all mankind; but the saving power of His passion must be applied to each individual soul. Hence He has a sheepfold, and is the shepherd only of those who are obedient to His word. "I am the door. By Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved; and he shall go in and go out, and find pasture." The Church

which He established is His flock, towards which He exercises the office of pastor. As the sheep look to their keeper for protection, so do we look to Him for guidance and support. "He is the Lord our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand." The shepherd rules, leads, and feeds his flock; and in like manner our Lord provides for the government, faith, and spiritual food of His children.

We are unable to guide ourselves, and our first need is that of a master. Order is as necessary for the Church of Christ as for the world. There is harmony in the natural world, and there must be also subjection in the spiritual life. Unity is an absolute necessity for the flock; and God could have no family on earth, which was not bound to Him, and submissive to His voice. There is one body, even as there is one head. The Church is appointed to bring together, by a supernatural bond, the various tribes of mankind. As we are by nature social beings, we seek for fellowship and sympathy; and grace, improving this element of our being, binds us together in the pursuit of our highest end. Union to the head, is the condition of life

to the body; and hence Christ, who is the life of the Church, communicates His own vitality to all who are joined to Him. And they who are mutually bound to him, are in Him reunited to each other. Subordination to the head is the first necessity of a spiritual organization; and thus the individual, without sacrificing any interests of nature, gains the guidance he needs to lead him to a supernatural destiny. If our Lord has a flock on earth, He must be the leader of its members in their journey, through life to eternity. And, in truth, without government the Church could effect nothing for the regeneration of the world. There is in man a strong inclination to society, and a yearning for sympathy; but pride counteracts the good effect of this natural instinct, and breaks the bond of brotherhood. No mere human organization has ever endured; and the brightest hopes of philosophers are soon dissipated by the individuality of ambition or selfishness. So worldly reforms produce no lasting good, and the reformers themselves soon become the worst enemies of each other. The perfection of the divine works is seen in the Church, which, gathering together all the various portions of the human family, gives to

the individual his true place, without the sacrifice of charity; while grace, lifting the heart to an aim above nature, cements in a sacred union those who have one common Father, live upon one bread, and journey to one home. All the power of the Catholic religion arises from the pastorship of Christ; and hence from Him flow its triumphs over the intellect and heart. The world confesses its power, feels that it has a force which the institutions of men cannot imitate; and all this is because the incarnate God is the ruler of the nature which He has redeemed.

But the sheep of Christ cannot walk by sense. They are not seeking an earthly city, to which natural landmarks and the light of the sun can guide them. If this were all, they would not need a divine shepherd. Man was not made for this visible world, but for the enjoyment of God, and the great Creator has given him endowments which elevate him above the plane of mere nature, and are destined to bring him to the vision of Himself. How shall he escape from the darkness of sense, and open his eyes to the true light? How turn away from deceit to the unchanging truth? How break the chains of sin and evil habit, and gain the freedom of a

child of God? He must have a special aid, and a light must be afforded him which will shine into his spiritual faculties. That light is faith, without which he is the mere creature of sense. The intellect itself reaches beyond this domain, but it cannot see clearly, and after long searches turns back dissatisfied. Sin is a fact which it cannot comprehend, and death stares wildly in the midst of its day-dreams. What shall be the fortune of the immortal spirit when the mighty hand, which put together soul and body, shall take to pieces the material temple, and leave dust to return to dust? Reason gives no certain answer; and hence the Creator steps in, to tell us of our destiny, to open a path for man to the sovereign good, and to guide him where every true instinct of his heart leads him. God speaks, and He can neither deceive nor be deceived. The creature hears the voice. It is the voice which awoke the universe out of nothing. He listens, and believes, and obeys. So, following the word of his Maker, he cannot err, but every step must lead him to the arms of Him who is truth. Our Good Shepherd supplies us with this faith. He is God and man in one person; and from His lips come forth, in our lan-

guage, the verities which illumine every dark way in life, and even unlock the door of heaven. It is our probation to hear His words, and to close our ears to all others; and then safe in His fold, He guides us to those eternal mountains, where the sunlight of truth always shines, where there is no need of a teacher, since the presence of God is the full illumination of every intellect. The Catholic Church has no authority but that of His voice, and no aim but to follow Him through the things of sense to the only real and true.

Yet government and guidance would be of no avail to us, unless our spiritual lives were continually supported by grace. The flock looks to its keeper for food, and in like manner we look to Christ for the nourishment our regenerate nature requires. Our bodies cannot live without food; and the soul, even in the natural order, depends upon the Creator. "In Him we live and move." But the supernatural life, whose end is the vision of God, is the fruit of the quickening power of grace, which communicates to us a new vitality. The great Artificer works in us, leaving still the freedom of the will intact. We are born by baptism into the king-

dom of heaven, but we cannot live without the constant assistance of the hand which has fashioned us for His own abode. God Himself then comes to the just man, and lives in him; and as evil flies before His face, so good increases by the breath of His Spirit. The Catholic religion proclaims that redemption is real, that the captive has been set free, that the sinner is made holy, that our works are meritorious. And why does she insist upon these truths? Because our nature is elevated, regenerated; because we are the sons of God; because the Omnipotent dwells in us. How, then, under the Christian economy, does the Good Shepherd fulfil this office? He opens the channels of sanctifying grace, and the sacraments take hold of us, and bear us up in their divine arms. He gives us His own flesh and blood. "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you." This flesh is the humanity of God, and has power to quicken the soul, and preserve the body for a glorious resurrection. By receiving this food we daily partake of life itself, and are more and more united to Him who has been completely victorious over death. Here, then, our

life flows from the veins of Jesus Christ, and He is the perennial fountain at which we drink, to satisfy every want of our spiritual nature.

II. But how does our Lord exercise His pastoral office? He is not visibly present upon earth, and yet the fold which is visible requires a visible shepherd. He has commissioned a priesthood to represent Him, and through their ministrations He works. Here, taking the Scriptures as an authentic narrative, we cannot be mistaken. He said to the apostles, "As the Father hath sent Me, even so I send you." "He that heareth you, heareth Me." And that there might be unity in the agency which He established, He made S. Peter the head of the Church, committing to him the whole flock, and bidding him to "feed His lambs and His sheep." Plainer words could not be spoken; and if our Lord did not intend what their natural meaning implies, He is open to the charge of having deceived mankind. The priesthood then represents Christ on earth, and discharges His office. Of themselves only mere mortals, they are enabled to become channels of great spiritual gifts, because of the invisible Priest who holds up their hands, and speaks through their lips. We reverence

and obey them, because the Master whom we serve has commissioned them. Through the ministry which He Himself instituted, of which the successor of S. Peter is the head, Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, accomplishes His work; exercises discipline in the external and internal order of the Church; teaches the faith; guards from all false teaching, and administers the sacraments by which He gives and supports the spiritual life of His people. Thus every end of the pastor is subserved, and He who so loved the sheep as to die for them, applies to them, day by day, the benefits of His passion. He is never separated from them, for His arms are ever around them to protect them. They see Him in the agents whom He has sent. They kneel before the altar where He offers Himself in the hands which He has anointed. They do not walk by sense, but the vision of faith is far clearer than the sight of mortal eye. They do not stumble upon the dark mountains, but in the night, as in the noonday, see plainly; and the voice which leads them conveys to their souls a sense of perfect security. The cloud led the Israelites by day, and the pillar of fire by night guided them to the promised land; and so,

through all the changes of time, Christ leads His people to the mansions prepared for them in heaven.

III. The characteristics of the Good Shepherd are of necessity communicated to the priesthood which represents Him on earth. The agents must in some measure partake of the spirit of their Master. He was entirely a sacrifice to the work of our salvation, and gave His life and His death for the lost sheep. So self-renunciation is the first requisite of the Christian ministry. They become the agents of God, and are admitted to labor, and not to the dignity of a mere profession. They are for the flock; and when, in obedience to the inward call, they are anointed to sacerdotal functions, they resign their personal liberty into the hands of Him who is to work through them. Henceforth they are not their own; they have given up their time, talents, and bodily strength, and must live in this world as strangers and pilgrims, set apart for the one end of their mission. Family ties and earthly cares are inconsistent with the consecration requisite for their great office. They are to be espoused to Him whose presence more than supplies every social want, who has con-

descended to make frail men, and not angels, the dispensers of His gifts. We need hardly intimate what must occur to every one, that apart from the Catholic priesthood, this characteristic is not to be found. As there is no other body which claims to represent Jesus Christ, so there is no other agency which pretends to enter into His divine spirit of self-sacrifice. Scattered throughout the world, separated from home and human ties, they are a living proof that the Good Shepherd has given His life for the sheep, that the Son of God has been incarnate. For without His example and power, no philanthropy could have devised the life which is above nature, which assimilates men to the angels, and brings back the state of unfallen purity. The existence of this priesthood is a fact for which no event of history can account, save the mystery which took place one night at Bethlehem. The very idea of the priestly character proceeds from the knowledge of Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Son of man, whose life was a vicarious oblation for the sins of the world. From Him all priesthood comes, since He is the victim of salvation, and always the real offerer of the sacrifice which has been placed in the hands of men. A mir-

istry which does not conform to His example, has not its origin from Him, and cannot be the instrumentality He employs for the regeneration of the earth.

There must also be unity in the representative agency of Christ. Himself, the one, ever present but invisible priest, accomplishing His office in every quarter of the globe; the many hands which He uses are as the members of one man. He needs many instruments, and calls multitudes to share His priesthood, that "from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down, His name may be great among the nations, and that in every place there may be sacrifice and a clean oblation." Yet to this body there must be oneness, both of end and of operation, else He who is essentially one could not work in them. They must be externally one, for without such unity there could be neither government nor guidance. God cannot be the author of contradiction, nor can He leave the world in any doubt as to the ministry which He has anointed. The priesthood which He has sent, must come down in an unbroken line from Jesus Christ, and be bound to the one visible head which He appointed. Reason altogether rejects any other ministry,

since, as there is one fold, there is one shepherd ; and if the unity of pastorship be destroyed, the oneness of the flock altogether ceases. Is any thing more impossible, than that the one God should teach by voices of men who mutually contradict each other? Internal unity is also absolutely necessary to the Christian priesthood, for if the principal be moved by one will, the representatives must likewise be influenced by one motive. The same is the end of their labors, and that of their Master, whose life was given for the salvation of souls. Holiness of heart, victory over sin in every form, the emancipation of soul and body from the miseries of the fall, union to God—these are the ends of all priestly labor, which, in the recovery of man, seeks above all things the divine glory. And as the means are devised by an infinite intelligence, they must be adequate and efficacious, so that the one Pastor, through many instruments, works for one end, and in one way. Perfect harmony attends the operations of His hands, and the concord of the spiritual world is as faultless as that of the numberless planets, which move unerringly in their appointed circuits.

Thus God magnifies His mercy, and the plan

of redemption gives glory to that supreme wisdom and overflowing love which in every line beam forth from Himself. Let us give Him praise, that mindful of our lost estate, He hath interposed, and in His own person hath become the priest and victim of a sacrifice which has infinite value. We have no other pontiff but Him, whom we see in the ministry He has commissioned. He speaks and acts through them, and faith looks through all to Him. The Babe of Bethlehem, the mangled Sufferer of Calvary is doing His work. We see Him going far into the desert, to seek the wandering sheep. His feet are torn by thorns, and His locks are wet with the drops of the night; yet lovingly He takes upon His shoulder the starving lamb, and warms it into life by the heat of His own bosom. This is our Good Shepherd, who not only feeds His flock, but gives to them His own life, that He may one day gather them in the green pastures above, where there can be neither want nor fear. Let us closely follow Him, and watch His every step. Let the vision of faith grow clear, and the eye of sense grow dim, that we may see Him alone. Faithful to the fold, we shall never wander. We shall lean on the breast that

bore once all our ingrati- tudes, and was exposed to the weapons of our foes ; and shielded by His sacred humanity, on which we live, we shall attain the paradise where His glory shall be revealed.

SERMON XXI.

THE THIRD MANIFESTATION.

“This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to His disciples, after He was risen from the dead.”—S. JOHN, xxi. 14.

For the Fifth Sunday after Easter.

THE last chapter of S. John's gospel records the mysterious appearance of our Lord to His disciples, at the Sea of Tiberias. The record is full of wonderful lessons, which the Church has improved, and which her history has realized. With it the Apostle closes his narrative, and seals up the burden of his prophecy. The whole scene, while it is a kind of farewell of the risen Lord to His children, is a prediction of the future. The evangelist calls it the third manifestation; and although it is the seventh recorded appearance of Christ after the resurrection, yet it is the last of three special visitations of the apostolic body. These visitations were hours

of extraordinary grace and remarkable revelations to these first founders of the Church. In the first, our Lord came at evening through the closed doors, to give His benediction of peace, and to impart to them the power of remitting and retaining sin, by virtue of the same mission which He had received from the Father. "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you. Receive the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."*

In the second manifestation, He showed His open wounds, in which is contained the mystery of His intercession; and converting the doubtful Thomas, laid down the law of faith as the great principle of the new dispensation.

In this third appearance, the kingdom is set forth, and the end of all things, when Christ shall come to celebrate the marriage-feast in heaven. Here our Lord puts together the lessons of the resurrection, and pictures the beginning and ending of His Church. We enter then upon this story, fraught with such deep meaning, and full of spiritual teaching. "There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas, who is called

* St. John, xx. 21-23.

Didymus, and Nathanael, who was of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples." These seven were together at the Sea of Tiberias, their old home, whence they had been called to be fishers of men. Once more, though under very different circumstances, they go out upon the accustomed lake. "Simon Peter said to them, I go a-fishing. They say to him, We also come with thee. They went forth and entered into a ship immediately, and that night they caught nothing." Here, in a mystery, are pictured the unity and perpetuity of the Church. In the one ship which traverses the lake, we see the ark which passes in safety the waves and storms of this life. It is Peter's bark, and the other apostles are the companions of his voyage. In that vessel the priesthood watches for the souls of men, and, sharing the compassion of their Master, toils through the night, enduring in darkness as in light, till the coming of the Bridegroom. In the twilight of the morning, Jesus stands upon the shore, but the disciples do not recognize Him. He said to them, "Children, have you any meat? And they answered Him: No. He saith to them, Cast the net on the right side of

the ship, and you shall find. They cast, therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." Seeing this miracle, the disciple whom Jesus loved, first recognized his Master, and said unto Peter, "It is the Lord." The contemplative soul is always first to discern the presence of God, and to see His hand in the wonderful providences wherein He hides Himself. And to those who thus set Him constantly before their face, He communicates the knowledge of His will, and the secrets of His own tabernacle. They know, by the attraction of their spirits, where the Lord manifests Himself, even when there are no outward signs of His coming. Yet the active soul springs forth with the impulse of zeal, reckless of danger, and fearless of obstacles, to press on where it sees the tokens of its Master. Simon Peter girds his coat about him, and casts himself into the sea, and runs to meet Jesus. The other apostles come up to the shore with their ship, and Peter drags the net to the land, and brings the fishes to the feet of his Lord. The net was not broken, but contained the exact number which they had caught, even one hundred and fifty-three. To understand this circumstance,

we must refer to another miracle which was wrought in the earlier part of our Lord's ministry. On a former occasion He was in Simon's ship, and after a night of toil, in which nothing was taken, the net was let down at His command. "And when they had done this, they inclosed a very great multitude of fishes, and their net was breaking."* Here are the "many called," who are brought into the kingdom of God by the preaching of Christ, even all those who have been washed and sanctified. Yet not all these reach the heavenly shore, for many fall away, rending the unity of the Church, and doing despite to the grace of regeneration. In this third and last manifestation are seen the "few chosen," whose number is fixed, the band which cannot be broken,—those who will persevere to the end, and attain eternal life. The net is cast on the right side of the ship, and those are taken who may stand at the right hand of Jesus, when He comes to judgment. Thus we see "the Lamb standing upon Mount Sion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name, and the name of His Father, written in their foreheads."† This was the number of

* S. Luke, v. 6.

† Apocalypse, xiv. 1 ; vii. 4.

those who were sealed, the fulness of the kingdom which Christ appointed to the apostles. "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb."

When the disciples had come to the land, "they saw hot coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread." Jesus had prepared a banquet for them, symbolical of the food which is the support of their eternal life. There is no food for the children of the resurrection, save the manna which came down from heaven, even the humanity of the Son of man. And here are two types of Him who fulfilled the sign of Jonas. The holy fathers considered the fish a symbol of our divine Lord; and here laid upon burning coals, it may signify the sacred manhood which was consumed with the agony of the passion; while the bread represents the flesh, which, on earth and in heaven, is the nourishment of the glorified life of saints. So, when the last morning shall come, they who are in Peter's net shall be landed safe on the celestial shore, and awaking in God's likeness, shall see Him, face to face, in whom they are to live forevermore.

When the apostles had partaken of this ban-

quet, there ensued a scene more wonderful, perhaps, than any they had witnessed. In the solemnity of that hour, which joined together past, present, and future, the Lord called Simon Peter to His feet, and gave him the commission to feed and govern His whole flock. As in a picture they had seen the fortunes of the Church, where Peter was the great fisherman of souls. He had drawn the elect to the presence of Jesus ; and they were saved, because they were taken in his net. Now, the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, gives Him the office which He had represented on the lake. Thrice He calls him to profess a love peculiar to his high dignity, a charity enlarged for all the fold of Christ ; and then, thrice He confides to his care all the lambs and sheep of His pasture. No history, sacred or profane, presents a sublimer narrative than this. It is a scene worthy of the risen Saviour, and full of the power of His glorified humanity ; and with it concludes His third manifestation.

Succeeding days have only proved the truth of this prophetic story. The flock of Jesus has ever been united under the guidance of S. Peter ; has never failed to find protection from

the Good Shepherd, and is nourished by a food which gives undying life. The one bark which has the divine promise, has passed through storms which have wrecked every other voyager.

In dark nights, when labor seemed in vain, an invisible hand has held up the arms of the priesthood, and the presence of the Master has made the toil of the disciple light. He has stood on the shore, and the distant horizon has been lighted with His glory. To the land of promise the bark has pressed on, where angels' food awaits the pilgrim. The Church has never lost sight of her mission, nor of the end of her journey.

The apostles went forth from this scene animated with new zeal for their work, and they never forgot the sight of Jesus as He stood upon that shore, and beckoned them to the banquet He had prepared. A few days passed away, and He ascended into heaven. They had no more the comfort of seeing Him with their bodily eyes, yet they knew that He was with them to direct their course. Remembering the food He gave them, they sought the reality daily at the altar, where the dread sacrifice was offered, and where their souls were athirst for God, yea,

even for the living God. Persecution came with all its force, and they cheerfully descended to the crimson stream, and were baptized in their own blood. The nights were often fruitless, but the fishermen were not weary. They were in a vessel which could not be stranded, for the hope of the world was in their hands, and they held the net the Lord had given them.

We are in this bark of Peter, and, confident in God's promises, we have no fear of the present or the future. We are Christian pilgrims, and to us belong the consolations of the apostles. We must ever keep the end in view, and through all the changes of time, press on to the haven of our rest. Much need have we of the lesson of the Gospel in this faithless age, which counts the things of sense as the only realities, and measures even divine revelations by the maxims of the world. Pleasure, or fame, or profit, are the divinities that rule in our day. Affairs seem to be regulated at man's choice, as if God did not reign in the army of heaven, or do according to His will among the inhabitants of earth. The multitude rushes for gain, and strives for place. Souls are sacrificed to passion, and vice seduces to death. Each one seeks his own

will, as if born to serve his own ends. "Nation rises against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." Yet, though the floods lift up their voice, there is One whose word can still the tempest. Man seems to have his desire, and the Church seems to be the loser; but, day by day the ways of providence clear themselves, as, through all the noise and contention, the boat of Peter bears on towards the shore, and "the Lord adds daily to her such as shall be saved."

The few who seek for God, and desire to do His will, are taken by the attractions of grace, and drawn into His kingdom. They are the sinners who, abhorring themselves, have washed away their uncleanness in the blood of the Lamb; the fervent, whose souls are inflamed with zeal for the honor of their King; and the humble, who esteem it a glory to be cast out for Him who was despised and rejected by mankind. These, all unknown by men, and hidden from the sensuous world, are the fruits of the resurrection, the temples of His presence who walks unseen among us, working on the right hand and on the left, until He accomplish the number of the elect. "Great is the mystery of piety, which was manifested in the flesh, was justified

in the spirit, appeared to angels, hath been preached to the Gentiles, is believed in the world, is taken up in glory."* The divine Word speaks in human hearts, and subdues them to faith. The will of God takes the place of human wills, and rules in the one body of His chosen. In the darkest day, Christ hath a witness upon earth, for there is a body which cannot see corruption. Above all storms His voice may be heard by those who are pure in heart. His word is sure.

Only let us be certain that we are walking in the light, cleansing our hearts from sin, purifying our consciences from dead works, and careful to improve every grace we may receive. Every call that we refuse turns His face away, and loosens the bands that bind us to so loving a Lord. He, whose heart was pierced for us, can accept nothing but our supremest love, and our only way of safety is to hold fast to Him with all our mind, and soul, and strength, with our whole being.

This third manifestation of Christ reminds us of His promised coming in judgment. He shall stand once more upon the shore to welcome the

* Timothy, iii. 16.

blessed of His Father to the kingdom they have inherited, and also to sever the just from the wicked. There shall then be no place for the ungodly, but that abyss of darkness in which Satan shall be bound. Think of that meeting when you may see Jesus face to face, and be like Him; and pray and strive that when He calls you in death, or comes to judge you, He may find you wholly His child. If here you abide steadfastly in Him, He will show you a safe passage through the waters of death; will receive you on the heavenly shore, and give you a welcome to His rest.

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SERMON XXII.

THE EMPIRE OF OUR BLESSED LADY.

“To him that shall overcome, I will grant to sit with Me on My throne.”—APOCALYPSE, iii. 21.

For the Month of May.

WE are now engaged, with all devout Catholics, in paying an especial homage to the ever blessed Mother of God. Through the whole year we depend upon her prayers, and live in her smile, and day after day increases our love to her. What would earth be to us without her? nay, what would even heaven be, if there were no Mary? For without her there could be no Jesus, n whose bosom our weary souls could find rest. Yet we are not satisfied with this general devotion to her whom God chose for His mother; we must have one whole month in which to show our gratitude. Her altars must be crowned with light, and exhale the fragrance of flowers for

thirty days, that the successive hours may accumulate our praise. We must kneel before her Child, as His sacramental benediction falls like new life upon our souls; and when our voices speak the name He loves above all created things, His filial heart will be quick to grant our every petition. We come this month as children to kneel at the feet of a mother. We have been unworthy of her love, and unmindful of our duty, and hence we come as suppliants to her throne, asking the continuance of her favors.

God has never forgotten her. She entered into His counsels from all eternity. She was obedient in the day of His power, and hence He has given her a throne above all creatures. All His redeemed are to sit upon thrones. He that overcometh shall sit with Him upon His throne. The Apostles are to have their seats in glory. Much more will she be rewarded of whose substance He took His flesh and blood, whose holiness far outstripped the purity of the angelic army. When we speak of her throne, we celebrate one of the facts of Christianity. Mary has a kingdom, and it is coextensive with the empire of Jesus. It is the realm of purity, holiness, and love. She has been established in Zion, and

has taken root in God's holy mountain. She is the queen of just souls.

Let us contemplate this empire of Mary, and the sources of her power over those whom her Son has redeemed.

I. The words which our Lord spoke from the cross were His dying testament to her: "Woman, behold thy Son; Son, behold thy mother." Whoever becomes the follower of Jesus, must also be the child of Mary. We cannot honor the Son and at the same time dishonor the mother. Faith in the incarnation naturally begets an affection for her whose flesh and blood were made the humanity of God. And as Christ is the head from whom all grace flows, as He is the mediator of justice, so He draws to His sacred person the hearts of all who seek His salvation. No tongue can speak the devotion to Him which springs up like a living fountain in every Catholic bosom. It is our secret strength, our inward principle of life. Yet as His love increases in us, it binds us day by day to the feet of Mary, and teaches us her especial offices towards sinners. As He would not come into the world without her, so He will not come into our hearts except in her arms; and He cannot

abide with us unless we cherish her presence. Nature and grace are here combined ;—nature, which binds the child in filial affection to the mother ; and grace, which elevates the mother to her just position in the economy of redemption. We can no more separate the Virgin from her Child, than we can sunder the Father from His coequal Son. Moreover, as the mother was the protector of Jesus when on earth, so does our devotion to her protect the supreme adoration which is due to the “ Word made flesh.”

Her maternity shields the great mystery on which our faith depends, and no client of Mary can be left to error concerning the proper humanity or true divinity of the Son of God. Yet her reign is in the heart as well as in the chair of the teacher. She teaches us how to love and adore the Babe whom she brought forth at Bethlehem ; the Child who found His only earthly rest on her bosom. She accepts our devotion and attracts us to her embrace, only that she may offer us to Him for whom alone she lives. And as we come nearer to her, and more closely imitate her virtues, we learn to love the incarnate Lord, who is the centre and repose of all hearts.

II. The foundations of her empire are laid in the favor of God as well as in her own virtues, and well has she earned the crown which she wears as queen of all saints.

First of all, she was conceived without sin, and by the merits of her Son was delivered from every taint of the fall. She was born with the innocence of Eden, and free from every chain of the adversary. As Eve was the mother of the fallen race, so is she the mother of the regenerate children of Adam. Perfect purity was then to attend her steps, and she came into this world as a queen with a sceptre of command in her hands. The devil was overcome in every point, and the empire of purity was at her feet. There had been no creature like her, and there could be none equal to her. She was the first and greatest of mankind in the robes of innocence. After her many have run, attracted by the odor of her ointments; but it was her office to begin the life of virgin purity. Clean-ness of heart is one of God's dearest gifts, and we often come too late to estimate its worth. We go into the world to learn its lessons and to be defiled by its touch, and when the heart learns the vanity of earthly things, we turn to

the fountain of holiness. We come with disordered affections and perverted wills, and the wrecks of our spiritual edifice have to be taken down, that God may build on a sound foundation an habitation worthy of Himself. But though we labor much, nothing will give us back innocence, or make us what we might have been if we had not sinned. Mary never had experience of sin, and hence she is our model. She is queen of purity, and into her kingdom we must enter, if we would wash away the pollution of the past, or lose the memory of transgression. Her home is the house of God, whence every evil thought is banished, where no word of defilement can come. She and her children form the garden, where the celestial Spouse walks to gather lilies. Many are the souls who, above all that grace may do for them, prize the coronal of purity. They have learned this lesson of Mary. They have been in her arms and have leaned upon her bosom. She has taught them to admit no lover but her Child. She leads them away from the desert to follow the footsteps of the Lamb, and she has shown them the sweetness which is contained in the sacred name of *Jesus*. She presides over the realm of

innocence by her peculiar right as the immaculate Virgin.

Yet we do not rest simply in freedom from crime. The soul which leaves the world behind, is athirst after God, and cannot pause until it has found Him, the well of living water. It must become like the object of its love, and adorn itself with those virtues which are fit for His presence. Holiness is the necessary aim of a pure heart; and if we seek not for a constant growth in grace, we are losing all spiritual life. It is Mary's office to lead us in this path. Her own virtues have purchased for her this right. When we have washed away our defilement in the blood of her Son, she takes us by the hand, and leads up the mountain where the Holy of Holies dwells. It is the steep ascent which she herself has travelled. Her wonderful sanctity began at the first moment of her existence, when the Spirit of God overshadowed her with His wings, and His words fell like dew upon her soul. It was a fertile soil, and no grace was given in vain. By constant co-operation with her divine guide, she outran all her fellows, surprised the angels in their gigantic course, and even excelled the love of the cherubim. And

the strength of her virtues was well tested. The cup of contempt was drained to its dregs, and poverty stripped her of all human consolation. No mere creature ever endured the sorrows which crowded upon her path, because of her relation to the Redeemer of men. In all she found perfection, and hence when the eternal Spirit beheld her, the plastic work of His own hands, "the brightness of eternal light, a mirror without a stain," He espoused her to Himself, and she became the queen of holiness, nearer to God than any creature, and the model and guide of the saints. To her, then, every sinner looks, when, from the abyss of wretchedness, he lifts up his eyes to the peace of heaven from which sin has separated him. Sanctity is in her hands. "In her is all grace of the way and of the truth, all hope of life and virtue." This wonderful path has no intricacies for her, for well she knows all its light and shade, all its heat and cold. She is the guide to sanctification, and the teacher of perfection.

Nor must we forget how she gained the empire over the most blessed of all souls, the divine heart of the incarnate God. As her holiness made the Holy Ghost her spouse, so did her

loveliness attract the complaisance of the Most High. The eternal Son chose her for His mother. What depths of tenderness are contained in this word, mother! Who can enter into the sweet converse which took place between Jesus and Mary? How completely did she hold that divine heart in her hands, when the fountain of Love itself was opened, and poured its whole force into her bosom? She was the mother of Love incarnate, which, in its omnipotence, waited upon her every word, watched her smile, wept with her tears. Is any thing less than this meant by the mystery of God becoming a child? The sacred relation of mother and child has in it a well of sweetness which soothes all the rugged ways of life, and calls ever to virtue and gentleness. What shall we say when God is the child, and when the torrent of sweetness gushes forth from the heart of the Creator, whose affections are infinite? Was ever mother so happy? Yes, the heart of Jesus was Mary's kingdom; there she could have no rival; that was her home. And as this most precious heart was the model of all just souls, so every heart which was assimilated to His, extended the bounds of her empire. He came on earth

to reproduce His like, as union with Him is the source of life, and conformity to Him the measure of holiness. The foundations of Mary's throne are then firmly placed in the heart of her Son, and hence her realm stretches out to all who bear His name. How idle to speak of Christianity which bears no likeness to Christ ! The disciple must be as the master. If Jesus loved Mary above all created things, the followers of Jesus must likewise give her their affections. If He called her mother, we must be her children also. To think otherwise is to rob the Saviour of men of His attributes, and to strip religion of its fairest and most winning face. She who is queen of the royal heart of God, asks no other seat of power, contends for nothing but the honor of Jesus ; for well she knows how she is all for Him, and how His jealous love can never forget her. She cares but for Him, and He is never more wounded than when those whom He redeemed neglect His patient and gentle mother.

And lastly, that the world might see how He recognized her offices, He has assumed her virginal body into heaven, and in the sight of all angels, has placed upon her head a crown.

What else could He do, in consistency with His perfections? She overcame the adversary from the first moment of existence to her latest breath; and, therefore, according to promise, she had a right to sit down with Him upon His throne. He promised to reward even a cup of cold water given to a disciple in His name. How should he reward the offices of maternity, or recompense the faithful Virgin, whose flesh, whose very features He bore? Verily, if Mary were not honored above all creatures, the incarnation would seem to be a fable. But what means the coronation? Is it only a formal ceremony? God could perform no unmeaning rite, and, therefore, when the Church tells us of her crown, it means to teach us of her dominion, of a real kingdom and a real sceptre. She has a mediatorial office, not of justice, but of intercession. While her Child is the only victim of salvation to interpose between our guilty souls and the offended majesty of His Father, she by prayer and tenderness pleads for us to the Child who holds all grace in His hands, and who loves to dispense it at her word. Is there any one who dreams that this mediatorship detracts from the power of the one sacrifice for sin? Why,

this is to contradict nature, to tell us that the honor of a mother can take away from the honor of her son. How unnatural is unbelief, and how inconsistent with the first principles of reason! The Virgin assumed into heaven, becomes the queen of all who are the children of grace. Her intercessions are their shield in every combat, and her words the teachers of purity and humility. While her prayers sustain the often trembling steps of the just, there is no sinner beyond the reach of her compassion.

Here, then, we have walked about the walls of this holy city, whose stones are gleaming with sapphire and emerald, and every precious gem, and have seen some of the foundations of this Sion in which God was pleased to dwell. This Jerusalem is from above, and its beauty is from the touch of its maker. He, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, built it for Himself, saying: This is My rest forever; here will I dwell, for here I have delight. Could we but enter into this home which God has chosen for Himself, we should not wonder at even the divine condescension to Mary. We have seen how she is the queen of holy souls, and how she is the sinner's guide in the narrow

way of sanctification. There is joy, therefore, this month, to all who really aspire for union with Jesus Christ. We are, indeed, full of infirmity, and each day only exposes some new weakness in our hearts. The multitude of our miseries often tempts to discouragement, since, in truth, the nearer we approach to God, the more fearful do our infidelities appear. Turn, then, to the face of our most gentle mother, and see how it wears a smile to cheer us on, and drive the clouds from our path. How can we doubt or hesitate when we can look upon that dear face which Jesus loved so well, and behold how it is crowned with a diadem of command? Do we tremble at the shadow which Satan throws around us? Can we not see the sceptre in her hand, which once broke to pieces his iron coronet? Do temptations weary us with their perseverance, and afflict us with thoughts which crowd unwelcome upon our holiest hours? Behold the foot of the Virgin, which, with its firm resistance, trod upon the head of the serpent. Behold the way of victory, the power to be purified by trial, to walk harmless in the fire. Yea, more than this, let the merciful darkness pass away, and she will show us how God was

in the cloud; how the great refiner was sitting to purge out our dross, to make our souls a mirror to reflect His own brightness. There is no gloom which the light of her countenance cannot dispel, no weariness which her cheering voice cannot turn into refreshment. She is our dearest mother forever. Let us lay the weight of our cares at her feet, and recline our too anxious heads upon her bosom. She sought us when the waves of sin dashed over us, when there was nothing in us to attract her love. Can she leave us now, when we have learned the sweetness of her name, when her own hands have brought us to Christ, and His regenerating Spirit has begun to work in us? We call her the Star of the Sea, because she is the guide of the mariner as he journeys home over the rough ocean. We are tossed by storms; clouds obscure the sun at midday, and the nights are dark; but ever tranquil and pure shine the rays which she reflects from her Child. Gentle, forgiving mother, bearing Jesus in her arms—showing Him to us even in our exile—how shall we thank God for thee? Thy purity carries us back to Eden when sin had never desecrated the virgin soil of a new world,

and forward to that better paradise the divine mercy has prepared. Thy holiness makes us yearn after complete victory over ourselves, that we may be like thee in heaven. Thy gentleness makes us weep that we have ever grieved the compassionate heart from which thou hast drawn such sweetness. And when we see thee bending adoringly over the little child, who is thy God, we fall on our faces, confounded at the length, and breadth, and depth of the divine love. O Mary! how hast thou taught us to love Jesus; how hast thou introduced us into the chambers of His heart! What shall ever separate us from thee? Not sin, for never more will we be unworthy of thy kindness. We will never wilfully sin again. Or, if through frailty and forgetfulness we wander for a moment, we cannot be cut off from thy light, for the deep night would frighten us into despair. The slightest shadow on thy face is enough to warn us of danger, for in thy smile we live; and sheltered by thy mantle, we are pilgrims till Jesus be revealed. We walk after thee, drawn by the odor of thy perfumes, and looking for the day when we shall be with thee before the throne of God. For thou art the immaculate Virgin,

holiest of all creatures, our own mother. When shall we be wholly thy children, and be made fit for thy pure embrace? Now, from the month of flowers, we look forward to a perpetual spring, where beneath thy feet the lilies always grow the roses ever exhale their perfume, and the blossoms never fade. There guide us, dearest mother; clothe us with the glory of thy Son; keep us close to thee, and we ask no more.

SERMON XXIII.

THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD.

“And the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God.”—**S. MARK, xvi. 19.**

For Ascension-day.

THE glorified life of our Lord on earth had its limit, and so when He had accomplished the days appointed, He ascended into heaven in the presence of His disciples. He led them out to the Mount of Olives, and there spoke to them His last words. He had laid the foundations of the Church, had given lessons for the guidance of His children in all time; and now He was to go up to His Father's throne, to take possession of His empire, and to send down the Holy Spirit to complete the work He had begun. The last scene of His life on earth was worthy of the exalted dignity of the Son of God. It was a triumph for heaven and for earth. On

the top of that mountain which overlooked guilty Jerusalem, He gave a last benediction to His mother and the apostolic company, and then raised Himself up above the clouds to His own seat of glory. They stood gazing after His form, which shone more brightly than the sun until He drew the curtains of the firmament behind Him, and the world saw Him no more.

The angelic army, overwhelmed with joy, crowded around the chariot of their King. "The chariot of God is attended by ten thousands; thousands of them that rejoice. The Lord is among them in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high; Thou hast led captivity captive."* "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in."† In our nature He entered heaven, returning as a conqueror from victory, and took His seat at the right hand of God. His humanity obtained its reward for labor and pain; and "He who was made a little less than the angels, for the suffering of death, was crowned with glory and honor." No greater recompense could be given Him, than in the flesh and blood which He took for

* Psalm lxxvii. 18, 19. † Psalm xxiii. 7.

our salvation, to sit down in His own place, amid the acclaim of the celestial court. No human tongue can describe the joy of those pure spirits, who had thronged in wonder around the manger of Bethlehem, had attended the steps of the incarnate God through all His poverty and sorrow, and had bowed themselves with grief before the mysterious sacrifice of Calvary. Heaven had seen no such day since the fallen angels were driven headlong to the abyss. But man participates even more in the triumph of Jesus, since as man He ascended, and as the first-fruits of the regeneration. His entry into the Father's presence was the admission of our race, the recovery of our lost paradise, since we are His members. "No man hath ascended into heaven, but He that descended from heaven, the Son of man, who is in heaven." As He is the meritorious and efficacious cause of our glorification, so is His ascension the exemplary cause of that assumption which shall take up all the saints in incorruptible bodies to meet the Lord. Where the Head has gone before, there must the members be; and as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. So the Re-

deemer has really gone up, to make way for our humanity, and to prepare a mansion for us. "In My Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you." * And not only did He open for us this entrance into the Holiest, but in our interest He sat down on the right hand of God. There, in the seat of all power, He abides to discharge His mediatorial office, until all things are reconciled in Himself. In that office He is a prophet, priest, and king, saving us by teaching the way of life, by atoning for our sins, by ruling our steps till we reach the land of promise. Every word of truth comes from His lips; He is the source of all life, and He is our only governor. His dominion as God over all is inherent in the divine nature, and has neither beginning nor end. His power as the mediator flows from His compassion, and is assumed for a definite end. "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet." He hath taken our nature; He hath paid our debt to the divine justice; He communicates His life to us, and then, like a shepherd, He leads us home. When all is accomplished, He will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the

* S. John, xiv. 2.

Father ;” when “all principality, and authority, and power shall have been abolished ;” and “God shall be all in all.”* Such is the meaning of S. Paul’s words. “In Adam all die : in Christ all shall be made alive. But every one in his own order ; the first-fruits, Christ ; then they who are of Christ, who have believed in His coming. Afterwards the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father, when He shall have abolished all principality, and authority, and power. For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. And the enemy death shall be destroyed last : for He hath put all things under His feet. And, whereas He saith all things are put under Him, undoubtedly He is excepted who put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then the Son also Himself shall be subject to Him who subjected all things to Himself, that God may be all in all.”† When the redemption of mankind shall have been fully accomplished, all things shall be reconciled in the Son of God, and the fulness of peace shall pervade the creation. That blessed vision which

* 1 Cor., xv. 24-28. † 1 Cor., xv. 22-28.

gladdened the heart of the Lord on the eve of His passion, shall become a reality. "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us : that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them ; that they may be one, as We also are one. I in them, and Thou in Me ; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast also loved Me. Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me ; that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me."*

This day, therefore, brings to us the end of all things, the consummation of God's plans, when redeemed humanity shall take its place around the throne, clothed in the divine glory. We look up to that heaven where Christ is gone before, and by faith behold Him sitting there in our nature. He is there with Mary, His mother, and around Him are drawn the spirits of all His saints. This is the centre of the mediatorial kingdom, and thither tends our every prayer,

* S. John, xvii. 21-24.

with every note of our feeble praise. The Head of the Church has conquered, and victory is the portion of all the members. This earth is the place of our exile, the scene of battle and suffering. Yonder in God's own arms is a rest, the home of the soul. There skies are always tranquil and serene; there no tempest blows; there no enemy dares to pursue us. There, is one changeless calm, one unbroken day, where the Lamb is the light. There, is one unvaried enjoyment of the sovereign truth, goodness, and beauty. When the Redeemer ascended there, He opened this heaven to our faith, and to our fruition. Now we fix our eyes where He has gone, and day by day we follow on, until in His path and by His strength we mount up to His embrace.

There are many mansions there. "Star differeth from star in glory." Impelled by the force of our Lord's ascension, let us try to gaze a moment upon those joys which God prepares for them that love Him. We shall find repose, when we shall be encompassed by the perfections of God. How grateful to the tired traveller is rest, the prospect of which cheers him in his exhaustion, as every day brings him nearer

the journey's end. Yet the repose of the blessed is no mere absence of fatigue, no state of inaction. There, in perfect tranquillity, and yet in the highest activity, the soul shall be refreshed. There, is no labor, no pain, and still the constant enjoyment of the good which the heart so long sought. Faith becomes sight, and no place is left for desire, since God fills every faculty with Himself, and He is every thing. His light pervades, illumines, and sanctifies all the saints. No shadow of darkness for one instant intercepts that light; and no ignorance weighs either upon the intellect or the will. Nothing can come between the soul and its Creator, for the battle is over, and the prize is won, and that prize is the eternal possession of God. The eye shall see Him; the spirit, in its inmost depth, shall see Him, and feed itself in one long unending gaze, where new beauty and new delight ever spring up from that infinite fountain. Holy Scripture has tried to paint to mortal senses some of these joys. It tells us of streets of gold, of walls of jewels, and gates of precious stones; of trees of life whose verdure never fades, whose fruits never fail; of living streams which, with their cool breath, make glad the

celestial city. It tells us of the myriad angels, from those who people the far outskirts of heaven, to the seraphim who fall upon their faces in the immediate splendor of the throne. It describes the song which never ceases to roll in from the harp of angel and saint; where strains, such as the human ear knows not of, are offered to the Most High. Yet, how inadequate are these words to express what thought cannot seize! We can only say, heaven is the place where God manifests His glory; and all that He could create would be nothing without Him.

These joys are for us. They were purchased by the blood of Christ, and, unworthy as we are, they await our choice. The great transformation is now begun, and time hastens till the work of redemption be completed. God came to us when we did not seek Him, and His love will lead us if we are submissive to His power.

‘We are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like to him; because we shall see Him as He is.’* Here is cause for exultation, and also for humiliation.

* 1 S. John, iii. 2.

The clouds are rolled away from the Holy of Holies, but we fear to enter in, and our eyes are dazzled, and turn back again to earth. Can it be that such as we can have so glorious a hope? Can souls like ours, soiled with sin, be made white and pure? Can these bodies, whose members have been the instruments of crime, be radiant with the glory of the Lamb? Shall the feet, which have been wearied in the ways of iniquity, be worthy to tread upon the golden pavement, and run swiftly as the angels in God's service? Shall the hand, once polluted by the touch of sin, be so blest as to bear the palm before the throne? Shall the eye, which lusted after pleasure, or kindled with an empty pride, be able to gaze upon the adorable countenance of Jesus, and see God face to face? Shall the heart, which was wont to love every thing but its Maker, learn to seek Him alone, and in Him find its only rest? Shall every thing earthly be cast out of our souls, and every thing heavenly enter in? Shall the fragrance of purity take the place of the odor of corruption? Yes, to the praise of redeeming grace, these miracles have been wrought. "God is ascended with jubilee, and the Lord with the sound of trumpet."

He hath subdued the people under us, and the nations under our feet. The second Adam is a quickening Spirit. He has the power to new-create us in holiness. He has left a cleansing fountain, in which the most unhappy sinner may be made clean. The power to bind and loose is with His Church, and to the famishing soul He gives Himself, the source of life—His own virginal flesh, the food of angels. His part in the redemption is a perfect work. But if we are to be made pure like our glorified Redeemer, we must co-operate with Him here; and the great change must begin on earth. The hour of death will work no such miracle as to transform the guilty into the innocent. It is worse than idle to dream of heaven, living unholy, and dying unholy, expecting some wonderful interposition in the last moment. They who have not sought here to cleanse their hands and purify their hearts, will find their hopes to be vain. Baptism cleanses the natural man. Penance looses the bands of sins against the light, and the saving Victim of our altars is the food of the returning sinner. He who is the ransom, communicates Himself to the ransomed; the unholy are cleansed by the Holy;

the impure, by the perfect purity of God. Streams which flow from the open heart of Jesus, make fertile the garden where the incarnate Lord is pleased to dwell. The penitent has no other means of purification. He who comes not under the cross, can never ascend where the Crucified has gone. For now in our nature glorified, He draws after Him only those who are conformed to His image. There must first be an ascension in heart and mind; and the affections must go before, to prepare the way for the triumphant assumption of the body. How can those who are totally unlike Christ look up to His throne, without one quality which would fit them for His presence?

There are those who bear the sacred name, and call themselves Christians, who have no part either in the resurrection or the ascension. They walk in sin; they stumble in the noon-day as if it were night; they have all their treasures here. What share have they in celestial joys to which now they are strangers, for which they have no longing? Were it not for the irrevocable decree of death, they would cling to earth always, and have no desire to be with God. Gross sin weighs heavily upon many con-

sciences, and grieves away the divine Spirit. Sins against grace are become habits, while few are found who listen to the heavenly voice, who persevere to the last in the discharge of known duty. We keep little account of our thoughts, our words run on as if we were not their masters, and God who guides us cannot keep us in the narrow way. We are ever calling for some new effort of mercy, some special adaptation of redemption to our waywardness. As this day the light of heaven streams down upon our souls, it makes manifest their unworthiness; it teaches us that we have much to do, and little time for our work. Let us not blind our eyes to the lessons of this festival. The door of heaven is opened, and yet we cannot, we dare not enter. Let us hasten to the side of Jesus. Blood is flowing there. There we may bring the members that sinned, the heart that rebelled. His lips are full of grace, and His sword is on His thigh. Gently, but firmly, His knife will dissect our wounds; speedily the sick shall recover their health, and at once the weary shall renew their strength. He will drive away the usurpers of His love, and take His seat on the throne of our hearts, there to reign until all enemies

are put under His feet. Blessed transformation of the sinner ! It is the ascension of the just. Every thing fails us ; sense grows dim ; earth decays ; friends desert us. He draws nearer to us each day, attracting us more and more powerfully to Himself, the fathomless ocean of truth and beauty.

“His cross makes me hate the world ; His glory makes me love heaven. He detaches me hence by His sufferings ; He draws me thither by hope. Here He is my way ; but it is a narrow way, hedged in with thorns : there He is my end—and that end, rest unchangeable. Thus all drives me forth from earth ; nothing retains me here. His love urges me, afflictions force me, sickness warns me of eternity ; death, which will rend every thing from me, casts a shadow over the things of time : hell itself beneath my feet, and heaven above my head, make one last effort upon my soul, and tell me that there is nothing between them but a little earth and dust, and that these will never satisfy the void in my heart.”

SERMON XXIV.

THE TEMPLES OF GOD.

“If any love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him.”—S. JOHN, xiv. 23.

For the Feast of Pentecost.

THESE words of our Lord were a prediction of the joys which we commemorate on this day. The coming of the Holy Ghost was long foretold, as the glory of the Christian dispensation, and shadowed forth by the celebrations of the old law. Three times a year, the Jews were commanded to appear before God, in the temple at Jerusalem. One feast brought to their remembrance the time when their whole nation abode in tabernacles; another, their deliverance from the angel of death by the blood of the paschal lamb; and another gave thanks to God for the fruits of the gathered harvest. The new law has filled up this outline with realities

of Christian faith. Christmas celebrates the hour when the Godhead tabernacles in flesh. Easter renews the triumph of the resurrection, when the true Paschal Lamb delivered His people from eternal death, and opened to them the land of promise. Fifty days are numbered now, and new rites make sacred the holy day of Pentecost. "Thou shalt number unto thee seven weeks from the day wherein thou didst put the sickle to the corn. And thou shalt celebrate the festival of weeks to the Lord thy God, a voluntary oblation of thy hands, which thou shalt offer according to the blessing of the Lord thy God."* With us, seven weeks have been counted since Jesus rose for our justification. He was the first-fruit of our harvest, presented before God in the holy place. The day of Pentecost is fully come, and the Holy Spirit has descended upon the Church with all His gifts. The garden which the Paschal Lamb watered with His blood becomes fertile, and already grows rich with golden fruit. God is within us, the source of holiness and life; and His breath makes the dry bones live, the barren tree put forth blossoms, and the dead soul

* Deuteronomy, xvi. 9, 10.

awake. Faithful to His promise, our Lord sent down the Paraclete, and this is the day which commemorates His entry into the kingdom of Christ.

Although He is an invisible Spirit, yet He came into the world with a visible triumph, and miraculous manifestations of His power. For He came to a visible Church, and to inaugurate an external dispensation, where the outward body is the sign or sacrament of the inward grace. He came not to the body of believers as individuals, but to the external organization in which He abides, and through which mercy flows to the members. Had he not purposed to make the visible Church the minister of His gifts, He might have silently glided into the hearts of men, and there would have been no society to which His sanctifying virtue was confined. The economy of salvation which required

visible Saviour, demanded also a visible body of which He was to be the head. There is one Lord, one body, and one Spirit. Before the ascension, the Apostles were bidden to wait for ten days in Jerusalem, until the promise of the Father should be fulfilled. Accordingly they spent a novena of prayer in the temple, and

when the morning of Pentecost had dawned, they were in their place of expectation. Suddenly a mighty wind shook the city, and the temple trembled upon its deep foundations. Cloven tongues of fire appeared upon the heads of the Apostles; and they were filled with new life, and began to preach the Gospel which they had learned of their Master. Jews and proselytes, and strangers from all the nations round about, crowded around them, and all heard in their own tongues the truths of salvation. The kingdom of Christ was opened to all the tribes of earth, and the mission of the twelve began its triumphant course. As an earnest of the work of the great fisherman, three thousand were converted to the faith in one day. Thus the words of our Lord were fulfilled, and the ancient prophecies were accomplished. God came to dwell with mankind, to live in them, and walk in them; and the shadows of the old law vanished before the substance of the new dispensation. The Holy Spirit, who had been the principle of all holiness to the patriarchs and prophets, now became the indwelling guest of the just.

To better understand the effect of this great

visitation, let us consider the fruits of Pentecost in the Church and in the individual believer.

Before His death, our Lord had gathered together a small band of disciples, and out of them had selected twelve, whom He named apostles. He had taught them much of the divine plan, and future destiny of the kingdom He was to set up, in the place of the system of Judaism. He had even promised to Peter jurisdiction over all His followers, in the words, "To thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven." But no complete organization was effected until after the resurrection, when the foundations of the Church were securely laid by His glorified hands. The body was prepared, but the soul was not in it; and had the operations of God rested here, the Apostles would have formed only a human organization. The divine breath was to animate that body, and give it life and motion. So, when the Father and the Son sent down the co-equal and co-eternal Spirit, the Church began to live by spiritual being. It was made a divine company, possessing the gifts of the Paraclete, whose temple it became. Life was its portion. The energy of Him, who once brooded upon the

waters of chaos, gave it victory over every natural law of decay. It could now pass through the world and still be above the world ; it could look without fear at man's hatred, and take the full force of his persecution. Like its crucified Head, it could walk through the wilderness, treading in its own blood ; and the dead bodies of its martyred children should be as seed sown in a fertile ground, the germ of an ample harvest. It could bear the lash of the scourge, and the more malignant lash of the tongue ; and yet go on unharmed, to develop its works of mercy, to be the parent of heroic virtue, to teach the nations all their ideas of holiness. It could not be subdued, and left to rot with the effete institutions of human philanthropy. Trampled upon, it was not conquered. It comes up at this day from its struggle of centuries, as young as when in its first vigor it went forth upon its perilous journey, with the dews of its baptism. Let the philosopher explain this miracle of history, and tell us why the Church of Jesus Christ has survived every fall of its persecutors, and alone has breasted the shock of revolution, and has been unharmed amid the crumbling of empires ! Let man assign whatever cause he

may, there is only one solution of the problem. God the Creator is in the Church, and His life is hers. But this is only the external view of her vitality. Grace is a power which not only gives existence, but exalts the possessor to a state above nature. That body of which the Holy Ghost is the soul, participates in the qualities of the Spirit that informs it. It is no longer a mere human body; it has an earthly exterior, but a divine heart. As the Son lives by the Father, and as their being is one, so the Church lives by God, and partakes of the divine nature. Hence is she immortal; and her life manifests itself not only in continued being, but in all the fruits which flow from the union of God with man. Victory over self, zeal, energy, heroic patience, love of poverty, angelic purity,—are the flowers which bloom in her garden. The world never saw these virtues before her lay, and cannot find them out of her bosom. The different members of an organization which covers the world, are cemented together by the virtue of the indwelling Holy Spirit. They are made one in Christ, and in each other, so that they shall speak the same spiritual language, kneel around the same altar, and hold the same

faith. Human hands have tried to produce this concord, and they have failed. Every thing which the Church touches becomes transformed by her vitality. She has no unmeaning rite and can have no formalism, since every externa is the outward face of something internal. God works through her, and His grace flows through her hands. She pours water upon the head of a child, uttering the name of the triune Creator, and that simple rite is a sacrament which does more wonderful work than the voice which bade light to shine in the primeval darkness. That child becomes a new creature, with a nature fitted to run a race of virtue on earth, and shine brighter than the sun in the courts above. The Holy Ghost effects this change, and with the water and the blood, bears His testimony to redemption. The blood atones for sin, while the water washes away the defilement, and the Spirit of God applies them both. It is His power which exerts itself in all the steps of our worship, and enables man to offer an acceptable service to heaven. He anoints the priesthood, and makes creatures the agents to dispense the gifts of Christ. He descends upon our altars, when in silence the priest takes upon himself

the person of the invisible but present Lord, and articulates the words which, but for His command, no mortal should dare utter. He meets the child at its birth, to sanctify him ; and is with him at the hour of death, to hallow that last act of the believer's struggle. It is because of His virtue that we call the Church the house of God, and the body of Christ.

And the gifts which belong to this body are the portion of every individual member. Each Christian becomes the temple of God, according to the words of the Gospel, "We will come to him and make an abode with him." The Holy Ghost dwells in the soul and body of every faithful disciple. "Know ye not," says S. Paul, "that your bodies are the members of Christ? Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?"* "You are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you."† This presence of the Paraclete gives to the soul new powers, since it supplies to the natural faculties a divine energy. The quickening force of God elevates our whole humanity

* 1 Cor., vi. 15-19.

† Rom , viii. 9.

into a spiritual life,—imparts even a new vitality to the body. “If the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He shall quicken also your mortal bodies, because of His Spirit dwelling in you.”* Grace here on earth, with all its blessed fruits, resurrection from the dead, and glorification hereafter, are the consequences of the abode of God in human hearts. As the Holy Ghost is called the kiss of peace between the Father and the Son—since, in their mutual love, He completes the circle of the divine processions—so is He the reconciliation between the soul and its offended Maker. The Father begets the Son by an eternal generation, and from both, in a coeval affection, the Spirit proceeds. The soul of man was created in the divine image for the enjoyment of God. It wandered by its own will in the ways of disobedience, when, through the incarnation and atonement of the Son, the Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, was sent to operate with the finite spirit, and to raise it by His energy to a new sphere, a state of being like that of the angels, whose wings bear them along by the impulse of the grace in which they live. So is

* Rom., viii. 11.

He the kiss of peace between the Father and His erring children. The Ancient of Days, whose glory no mortal can approach, welcomes even the rebel intelligence, because it returns by the power and on the wings of His co-equal Spirit. And man looks steadily upward, and ascends to that consuming fire, because God the Paraclete bears him up, and the divine presence prepares him for the meeting when he shall be swallowed up in life, but not destroyed. And this kiss of our Maker implies love, which, in intelligent nature, is the first sign of vitality. It conveys the affection which it bestows; and the loved, warmed into action by the sacred touch, turns to the lover, and gives the heart which no earthly tie can satisfy. "The charity of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us." It is no small stream, arising from a human source; it is a torrent which bears the divine Creator Himself into our bosoms. It is a river running from the heart of God into our souls, and thence returning to Himself. It runs through all the ranks of the blessed, and glides by those banks which are dressed in unfading verdure, where it makes glad the city above.

What mortal tongue can describe those gifts which the intellect cannot comprehend? Like all the joys of Jesus, they are to be known only by experience, for they cannot be fathomed; neither is there any end to their sweetness. Well is the Holy Ghost called a comforter, since in every want or struggle He gently shields the soul with His consolations. The Church finds not words enough to express the tenderness of His nuptial embrace. She calls him the Father of the poor; and poor indeed should we be without Him. He is the light of the heart, for there is no affection like His, to cheer and illumine the sensitive nature of man. Where He is there can be no darkness; and His beauty never grows old, while His truth never disappoints. He is the best consoler, the sweet guest of the soul, and a sure refuge to which the weary may always turn. He gives repose to the laborer, tempers the heat to the traveller, and solaces the mourner. His beams shine into the most secret parts of our being, and every shadow flees before Him. He can wash the unclean, refresh the dry and thirsty, and heal the sick and wounded. He can bend the stubborn, warm into life the cold and negligent, and guide the

wayward by His gentle discipline. It is He who gives merit to virtue, and leads the voyager to the port of salvation, to eternal joy. This, then, is a day for us to lift up our hearts, to lift them up unto the Lord, since, with the joys so profusely shed around, the whole world exults, and joins in the hymn of glory which the angelic powers are chanting without end. "The voice of God has shaken the deserts; the voice of the Lord hath divided the flame of fire." The face of the earth has been renewed. It was a moral chaos before He came, but when He brooded upon the shapeless waters, the fallen race became regenerate, a new creation in Jesus Christ.

To-day we give thanks for our new birth, for our union to the incarnate God, for the peace that passeth understanding here, for the hope of glory hereafter. Never before had the Most High dwelt in man; now He abides in all who have been baptized in His name, and are led by His Spirit. "You are the temple of the living God; as God saith, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."*

* 2 Cor., vi. 16.

the promise of Christ is fulfilled, that the virtue of His flesh reaches our humanity, that the sons of the fallen Adam have become the sons of God. What gratitude shall we not render to Him who, knowing our want, has more than supplied our desire! To Him we owe every good thought and work. We look back upon the path by which He has led us, and it is full of remembrances of His long-suffering and kindness. He has never broken faith with us, though we have often deserted Him. We have been unmindful of His presence, and this has been our most bitter ingratitude. We cannot estimate our dignity, nor know in this life the value of grace. One ray of its light would send joy into a lost soul, and turn even hell into a paradise. Heaven itself is the temple of the Lamb, where the glory of God makes perpetual day. We are the tabernacles of the same glory, and heaven anticipates itself in our hearts when we are fully obedient to the divinity within us. We are now the sons of God, we know the mind of the Spirit, we search into the deep things of Omnipotence. The supreme perfections are our model, and we are changed with the same image, from glory to glory.

Yet, sinners as we are, this view of our high estate only sets in its true light our unworthiness, and even our danger. "If any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy for the temple of God is holy, which you are.' An angel's fall cannot be more awful than our loss of the grace of Christ; and when we bring sin into the very presence of the Holy Ghost, we offer an affront to the sanctity of God Himself. If we have defiled our bodies, which are the members of Jesus Christ, if we have polluted our souls, if we have lost our baptismal innocence and soiled the cleanness of our conscience, then in penitence must we kneel at the throne of the Paraclete for the consolation He only can dispense. He can wash away our guilt, and heal our wounds, and lift up the broken spirit. He can take the heart dry and withered, and quicken it into a vigor even innocence had not known. He can purify the hands and brighten the eye, and open the ear to heavenly melody, and unloose the tongue. He is the great Creator, and He delights to show His power, where all earthly hope has died away, where ruin stares in the face, and desolation has crushed the energy of the soul in its

cold embrace. He will take the vile and worthless, the dead and the dying, and bear it up to be a jewel of honor in the mansions of the just. Like the Redeemer, He will bear the lost sheep upon His bosom, and give to the penitent His tenderest caress. Let us pray to Him, who is the Father of the poor, never to leave us; for if once we grieve Him away, a night of sorrow will set upon our souls. Let him be our pillar of fire to lead us through this wilderness to the paradise of rest, and under His guidance we shall journey safely. Light shall increase, as day by day we yield to His power, and when at last the shores of time recede from view, He will lead to that great temple in which the Sovereign Good shall illumine our whole being.

SERMON XXV.

THE MYSTERY OF THE HOLY TRINITY.

“O the depth of the riches, of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!”—ROMANS, xi 33.

For Trinity Sunday.

THE Church has now led us through the circle of mysteries which relate to the life and death of the Son of God. We have celebrated the facts by which our redemption was accomplished, from the incarnation to the ascension of our Lord. We have commemorated the coming of the Holy Ghost to perfect the work which the ministry of Christ had begun. Now we pause a moment, and in the retrospect of all these mercies, lift up our hearts to contemplate some of those great truths which have been revealed concerning the Divine Being, and His dealings with our fallen race. To-day we venture to meditate upon God Himself, and the manner of

His existence. He is the end of our intellects and of our affections, since to know Him is perfect illumination, and to love Him, perfect felicity. By nature we can discern little of Him beyond His necessary being, which involves in itself all perfections. That He is one God, existing in three persons, is a truth which, of pure condescension, He has been pleased to make known. Created things, indeed, contain the images of this Trinity, as its likeness is impressed upon our souls, and printed upon some pages of the visible universe. The clear knowledge of the mode of God's being is, however, the fruit of revelation which has been granted to the finite intelligence for its perfection. With thankful and adoring hearts, let us contemplate this great mystery, and as with faith we look upon the great First Cause, the sight will enlighten and sanctify us. We shall consider the existence, unity, and trinity of God, the pater nity of God the Father, the generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Spirit.

The existence of God is a truth evident to reason, and, at least, implicitly contained in every intellectual act. The effect implies the cause, and contingent being involves necessary being ;

and the mental intuition of God is certainly beneath every one of our cognitions. If man look out of himself, he beholds the evident signs of a divine hand. Thus S. Paul tells us of those who are in the state of nature: "That which is known of God is manifest in them, for He hath manifested it to them. For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; His eternal power also, and divinity; so that they are inexcusable."* Finite things could not produce themselves, nor come by chance; and their order, beauty, and wonderful texture, as well as their purposes and operations, show the power and wisdom of Him who made them out of nothing. The finite implies the infinite, as the created the Creator, and the idea of defect that of reality. Every act of God is a kind of revelation of Himself; and the intelligence could hardly be made without some knowledge of the Great Mind which spoke it into being, which is the fountain of all knowledge; an intelligence unmade, having the reason of its existence in itself, and, therefore, eternal. The dealings of God with man have been the

* Rom., i. 19, 20.

cause of new revelations. He has communicated His will directly to mankind, and by miracles and prophecies has substantiated the medium He has chosen for conveying truth. He has become incarnate, and, in the person of Jesus Christ, God and man, has made visible the way, the truth, and the life. The human soul needs no proof of His existence, for taught by reason it cannot doubt; and illumined by revelation, it is brought into immediate communion with its Maker, who in the highest sense is its beginning and end. So God is being necessary and eternal, to whom belong all realities, who is reality itself; and by Him alone it is that any thing is possible, internally or externally. His divine mind contains all possibles, and His omnipotence produces every thing that exists. And as in necessary being are involved all realities, so in God are all perfections, for one defect would take from His infinity, and he would cease to be God. Thus He is omnipresent, immutable, omniscient, almighty, and can suffer no limitation.

The unity of God is as necessary as His existence. There cannot be two infinitely perfect beings, since perfection implies excellence, and

excellence in the highest grade cannot exist where there is a rival. God is, by nature, perfectly independent: and if there were two Gods they would be mutually dependent, and neither would be God; or one would be superior to the other, and then the inferior could not be God. There can be but one Supreme Governor; and God has by nature entire dominion over all things. But He is so perfectly one, that no unity like His can be found. No other being can have existence but from Him; and whatever hath its being from another, is not God. The same arguments which establish His existence, prove also His unity, since He is necessarily the one source of life to all that exists, and the fountain of possibility to all that can exist. In this perfect oneness of the divine essence there are three persons, coequal, coeternal, and consubstantial: the Father, who receives from none; the Son, who is eternally begotten of the Father; and the Holy Ghost, who eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. This is the nature of God's being, for He is essentially a Trinity. Each Person is distinct, and endowed with all the attributes of personality. Each has the whole divine essence, so that there is neither

superiority nor subjection, and yet there are not three Gods, but one God. "The Father is of none, neither created, nor begotten; the Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten; The Holy Ghost is of the Father and the Son, not made, nor created, nor begotten but proceeding. There is, therefore, one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. And in this Trinity there is nothing before or after, nothing greater or less, but the Three Persons are coeternal and coequal." God the Father communicates the whole divine essence by an eternal generation to the Son; and the Father and the Son communicate the same essence, in one act, to the Holy Ghost by an eternal procession.

So while to each Person there is a proper and distinct personality, the unity of the Godhead is preserved, since there is but one divine Essence. The First Person, who is of none, is called the Father. His paternity refers not principally to creatures of which He is the maker and preserver; nor, indeed, to those whom by redemption He has adopted in Jesus Christ. Our Saviour said: "I ascend to my

Father, and your Father ;” but My Father, according to nature in the Godhead, your Father according to grace in adoption. He is the Father, because from all eternity He begat the consubstantial Word, who “was with God, and was God.” He was always Father by reason of this generation, as He was always God. He did not in time become a father, but without any beginning He is always the Father, for He was never without His coequal Son. Because now He hath the divine essence in Himself, while He communicates the same to the Son, He is called the First Person, or, in the language of the early fathers, “the origin, the root, the fountain, and the head of the whole divinity.”

The Second Person was neither made, nor created, but was eternally begotten, since the Father, by an act which, in our language, we call generation, communicated to Him the whole of the divine essence. The “Word was in the beginning with God,” “the splendor of His glory, and the figure of His substance, and upholding all things by His power.” He is not inferior to the Father, because He receives from Him all that He is, in the essence of the God-

head ; and being perfectly divine, He can have no superior.

The Holy Ghost proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, because by one act, which we call spiration, they, as one principle, communicate to Him the whole essence of the Godhead. This then completes the circle of the divine productiveness, if we may use such a term ; and the Holy Spirit, being in the same unity and equality of substance, is, according to the words of S. Bernard, "The sacred kiss of the Father and the Son, as their imperturbable peace, their firm coinherence, their undivided love, their indivisible unity." "The Holy Ghost proceeds from both, and embraces both, as the indissoluble bond of charity, the sweetest kiss of peace, the most blessed embrace of mutual love." Thus, in the Trinity, to employ the language of theology, "there are two origins, the first by the way of knowledge, and the other by the way of love. By the first, is a Son coeternal with His Father, who comes forth from the bosom of the Father, but leaves it not ; who receives all from Him, but is not dependent on Him ; by the second, is the Holy Ghost produced like the Son, but not like Him begotten.

The Son proceeds from the Father, as the rays from the sun; the Holy Ghost from the Father and Son, as heat from the ray and the sun: the Son as the word; the Holy Ghost as the breath: the Son as the river from the fountain the Holy Ghost as the lightning from the cloud. These expressions are good, but all defective. The ray wants equality; the heat substance; the word wants reality, the breath solidity, the river stability, the lightning duration and life. But here the ray is equal to the sun; the heat consubstantial with its principle; the word says all, and is all that it says; the breath goes forth unceasingly, and never breathes its last; the river flows continually, and abides ever in its source; the fire of heaven burns always, and never burns away.”*

“If that which is given, hath as its principle Him by whom it is given; it must be confessed that the Father and the Son are one principle of the Holy Spirit, not two principles. But as the Father and the Son are one God, and relatively to the creature are one Creator and one Lord, so relatively to the Holy Spirit they are one principle; but to the creature, Father, Son, and

* Nouet, “Meditation for Trinity Sunday.”

Holy Spirit are one principle, as well as one Creator and one Lord.”*

All the attributes of the Godhead belong to each of the divine Persons. There is one uncreated, one eternal, one immense, one omnipotent God, to whom we ascribe all glory. He hath a dominion unlimited, as Lord of lords and King of kings. His will cannot be controlled by any necessity, for He hath but one necessity, that of being. Every thing hath its being from His power, and all things are subject to Him. His power hath no limit, since he can do all things possible, and all things are possible to Him, save the contradiction of Himself. “He doth according to His will, as well with the powers of heaven as among the inhabitants of the earth; and there is none that can resist His hand, and say to Him, why hast Thou done it?”† He is the Creator of all things, spiritual or material, visible or invisible. In this great work the three Persons concur. “All things were made by the Word, and without Him was made nothing that was made;”‡ and yet, “by His Son, God the Father made the world.”§ “By

* S. Augustine de Trinitate, v. 14.

† Daniel, iv. 35.

‡ S. John, i. 3

§ Hebrews, i. 2.

the word of the Lord were the heavens established, and all the power of them by the Spirit of His mouth." "The Spirit of God moved over the waters of chaos," and when man was created, God said, "Let *us* make man to our image and likeness." In the Holy Trinity, there is perfect unity of action, as of essence. God precedes the multitude, gathers together the multitude, yet mixes not among the multitude of beings which He creates. The world is of recent origin: where was it before its creation? In nothingness. Where was God? In His eternity, unchanged and unchangeable, in bliss capable neither of increase nor diminution. He produces multitude and unity by His power, and Himself excludes numbers. For, as S. Ambrose says, "Not unity, but division of power maketh plurality. How doth the unity of the Godhead admit plurality? for plurality belongeth to number, but the divine nature admitteth not of number." Thus: "God multiplies all, and is unity itself; He composes all, and is simplicity itself; He binds all together, and is not bound; He produces all, and has no other principle of existence than Himself."

To this great God, incomprehensible in being

as in glory, do we poor sinners look up. He is our Creator, and our Father in His Son Jesus Christ. The beloved disciple whose head often reposed upon the breast of Love incarnate, who, like the eagle, dared to gaze at the sun, was cheered in his lonely exile by the vision of the reality which faith contemplates. He saw "a throne set in heaven, and One sitting upon the throne. And He that sat, was to the sight like the jasper and the sardine-stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And there were four-and-twenty seats, and four-and-twenty ancients sitting upon them, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns upon their heads. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, and voices and thunderings; and there were seven lamps burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. And before the throne, there was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal." Four living creatures were waiting the will of God, full of eyes to see His will, and ever active with wings to do His pleasure. "They rested not, day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come. Then the four-

and-twenty elders fell down on their faces, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory, and honor, and power; because Thou hast created all things, and by Thy will they were and have been created.”* Who can understand a scene like this? It is an opening of heaven, where one day we hope to go, to dwell unconsumed among these glories, to be one with these celestial beings, whose life is adoration. The burden of their swelling liturgy is praise to the Triune God; and we, on our knees, bow down to join in their adoration. Let us learn the lesson which lies at the foundation of all our worship, and all our spiritual life. God is every thing, and the creature nothing. This is the principle which supports the whole edifice of spirituality, which unites the finite to the infinite—man to his first beginning and last end. God hath all realities in Himself, all power, all truth, all goodness, all beauty. Henceforth must we regard nothing but Him, and, attaching ourselves only to Him, despise all besides; we must be filled with Him, and be emptied of all that

* Apocalypse iv.

He is not. For He is the supreme illumination of the intellect, the object of its vision, and the light by which it sees. He is the sovereign goodness, the only true object of affection, the only real resting-place of the creature's heart. His beauty, when revealed, attracts, ravishes, and transforms the soul, and produces in the created the likeness of the uncreated. The heart that seeks repose out of Him, is filled with vanity, when it has dimensions large enough to receive a good which would perfectly satisfy, and which is beyond the reach of any robber. This world and all its fair show pass away; but while temporal pleasure vanishes like the cloud, it leaves disgust behind, and the marks of its defiling fingers. Death raises his grim head where the dance is most lively, and the revel most loud. That iron sceptre breaks the neck of the strong, and blanches the beauty which in one moment turns into dust and ashes. Every thing deceives but God, who is, in His immutable perfections, the end of souls which wear His likeness. Why, then, should man labor for that which perishes, which cannot satisfy, when the great God offers Himself as his reward, when

he has but to detach himself from earth to gain the Supreme Good ?

The Holy Trinity is the centre of glory, to which all the works of the Creator tend. Heaven is filled with this glory which spreads itself through the ranks of the celestial hierarchy. Hell, with the fires which justice has lighted, sends up its tribute to the Lawgiver. Earth is the seat of mercy, which, in its fulness, upholds the creation, animate and inanimate. Man was made to give praise to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to the power, wisdom, and virtue which have been magnified in His visible works. The sun pours its beams, and opens in varied colors all the beauties of the universe; yet the eye alone sees them. The splendor of the divine perfections shines in all the creatures of God, yet the spirit of man alone perceives them.

For this reason He placed man in the world, to be the admirer, the witness, the panegyrist of His greatness. He has confided to him His glory here, and has intrusted to his hands, as a precious charge, all the honor that He desires to obtain from His works. And

what is man but a heavenly tree, which the eternal Father has planted, which the Son hath watered with His blood, which the Holy Ghost hath cultivated to bring forth glory, the only fruit that it can yield to the three divine Persons?

Memory, will, and understanding turn to their Author; and three powers in one soul are eternally to be spent on Him, who is the only light of the intellect, or motive for the liberty of a free agent. This is the great First Cause, in whom we live, the Creator who drew us out of nothing. How fearful is His power! how incomprehensible His intelligence! how overwhelming His beauty! "O the depths of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!" There is an all-seeing eye, which looks into the secrets of all hearts, a justice from which no sinner can escape, a holiness which, when compared with our countless impurities, seems like the lightning of a consuming fire. Yet there is love yearning over the work of His hands,—love that has gushed in a divine torrent to earth, love that has stooped to clothe itself with our flesh, to hang upon a cross.

Great God! help our nothingness; teach us the way to Thy throne. Our wearied spirits hang upon Thee. Take us up from the dust, in which we hide our faces, and bring us to Thyself, our only rest.

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SERMON XXVI.

THE BREAD OF LIFE.

“This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.”—S. JOHN, vi. 59.

For the Feast of Corpus Christi.

AFTER reverently contemplating the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and looking directly at God, who is the fountain of all light, we are called to kneel before the altar, and adore the great sacrament which contains the fulness of the divine condescension. Christ, our Lord, being about to go into heaven, was still unwilling to leave us. He has remained with us—not, indeed, in the visible form in which, for thirty years, He appeared on earth, but invisibly, and under the veils of the Sacrament. Thus He has not left us orphans, but, continually embracing us with fatherly love, He is the sacri-

fice whereby we worship God, and the Bread of life which nourishes our souls. If there be any day in the whole year, which moves the Christian heart, it is this day. The depths of human feeling are broken up, and rush in torrents around the throne of the sacred Host. God's mercy is too great for us to speak of; it overwhelms our souls. Jesus is a victim still—victim of His own love, and of our sins. We throw ourselves at the feet of this divine Sacrament, and give ourselves back to the fountain from whence we have drawn all our life. How could we exist without this precious Sacrament? Life would not be life, nor earth the garden of our incarnate Redeemer. We should fall by the wayside, and despair of regaining Eden; we should faint under the summer's heat, and perish in the winter's cold. We should have no sacrifice by which to appease the justice of heaven, or shield our numberless infirmities; no consoler in the miseries and weaknesses of our pilgrimage. All that God might give us, would not be enough without Himself. We want Him: He is the manna which alone can satisfy our hunger, the spring of water for which our thirsty souls are panting. The divine

Eucharist seems to contain in itself the whole mercy of redemption, since it contains the Redeemer, the Author of grace and salvation. Therefore all Christian hearts beat to-day with a new pulsation of joy, the altars beam with light, the sky seems more serene, the air borrows the quiet of heaven, when creation, animate and inanimate, bows itself before Jesus, God of love, in His loving Sacrament.

That we may worthily join in this thanksgiving, we will reflect for a moment upon the mystery, the certainty of its revelation, and its merciful adaptation to our wants. And in the presence of Him who is our teacher, of whom we speak, we shall need no exhortation to devotion and praise.

I. A mystery is a truth partly hidden, whose reasons we cannot fully fathom. Thus, in every mystery, there is a plain and simple verity revealed. We understand the verity as it is announced to us, but it is above reason, and we do not know how it is, nor do we comprehend why it is. The incarnation of our Lord presents to us the simple fact, that God becomes man, while He still continues, of necessity, God. We receive this fact, and are able intelligently

to believe, that "the Word was made flesh," that Jesus Christ, the child of Mary, is God. We cannot penetrate into the laws of the divine Being, nor know the manner of His operations. He could not be God if He were not above us, nor can a finite measure an infinite intelligence. Truths above reason cannot be contrary to reason, for in such truths reason is no judge of the concordance or repugnance of the attribute and the subject. There is no limit to the divine power but that of contradiction; He can do every thing but contradict Himself. In the case of all mysteries, we require the testimony of God, who, directly or indirectly, must reveal to us any verity which our natural powers do not discover. And where there is undoubted revelation, there can be no difficulty of belief to a right mind; since we cannot question the omniscience of God, nor His ability to make known any truth. He cannot take away the clouds which encompass His throne, nor make all things clear; for He cannot make the creature equal to Himself. The sacrament of the Eucharist contains the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, under the form and appearance of bread and wine. We can

draw out of this statement all that God has been pleased to reveal. His priests take bread and wine, as He did, and do as He commanded, using His own words; and then, as two substances cannot coexist in the same space, the substance of bread and wine, passes away, and is replaced by the body and blood of Christ. The accidents remain; the form and appearances are there still; but there is nothing present but Christ. By the very terms of this mystery, the senses are no judges, since they can only appreciate the accidents, which still remain under the substantial change. There is no other way for Christ to be really present, for if the bread be His body, it cannot, at the same time, be bread. Reason, therefore, apprehends the consistency of this mystery, which changes the natural laws, but breaks them not. It is not above the power of God to do this miracle. We do not understand how He does it, nor can we pry into the mode of His infinite condescension. It is the office of faith here to believe and adore.

II. It is so certain that God has revealed this mystery, that there is no room left for doubt. If He has not revealed this verity, He has re-

vealed nothing. Our blessed Lord sufficiently established the divinity of His mission, and it is from Him, the founder of Christianity, that we draw all our proofs. His disciples heard His teaching, and have transmitted to their successors His doctrines. We must accept their testimony; for rejecting historical Christianity, we have no foundation for any thing more than pure deism.

There is one unbroken and unchanging witness to the nature of the Eucharist, from the time of Christ Himself. Until the late unhappy separations from the Church, all who have in any way professed the Christian name, have received our doctrine. The mystery of our altars has been the great act of worship of all believers, as well as the source of their spiritual life. Without it, the Church had been no Church, since it had been without either priesthood or sacrifice. No one can deny this simple historical fact; and, in face of it, it is impossible to accuse the received Christianity of falsehood, without charging Christ with failing in His undertaking. The Church which He established could not fall into error, without involving Him, because, firstly, He promised that

it should not ; and, secondly, it was His institution, and its failure would have been the ruin of His new system of religion. Without adverting to the divine authority of the Church which rests upon abundant evidence, prescription is an argument whose force all reasonable minds acknowledge. It would be utterly impossible to introduce a doctrine like this of the blessed Eucharist, and to give it universality, if the Author of Christianity had not taught it.

But, taking the Scriptures as an authentic narrative of what Jesus Christ said and did, we have the proof which a child can understand, and which no sophistry can overthrow. Our Lord has given a long discourse on this sacrament, in which He explains the prophecies both of word and of fact. In the preceding economies, there were many figures foreshadowing this mystery. The manna which fell from heaven, to support the children of Jacob in their journey to the promised land, was a prophecy of fact. He tells the disciples that He Himself is the *true* manna ; that His flesh is the bread of life. And to leave no room for doubt of His meaning, He says, "Except you

eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you.”* Nothing is plainer, and there is no sense possible but the literal, unless you altogether pervert the language, and destroy the whole force of the discourse. Biblical scholars have examined all languages, and have found no expression like this, except it were taken either in a literal sense, or with a meaning which would be impossible here, as it would imply insult and injury to our Lord. So, on the night before His death, when, in the most solemn manner, He instituted this sacrament, His simple words are, “This is My body—This is My blood.” It is the sublime language of the Creator, who said, “Be light made,” and instantly there was light.

If now the great Teacher, whose every word dropped wisdom, did not mean what He said, it must be admitted that He intended to deceive mankind; for He knew well the natural force of His words, and could not speak unadvisedly. The Apostles so understood Him, and the Church built by their labors has always preserved both His language and the mystery

* S. John, vi. 54.

which it produced. To say that it is hard to believe so high a truth, is to touch in no way the power of our argument. If God has revealed it, it is certainly true; and if feeble reason cannot fathom it, it is only because the creature is not equal to the Creator. It is not more difficult to receive than any other part of revelation. It is not more wonderful than the sacrament of regeneration; not more mysterious than the unity of three persons in God. And as for understanding the mode of Christ's presence: we are unable to understand the manner of our own being;—how the bone grows, and the flesh covers it; how life springs from the dying seed, and inanimate nature blooms with verdure, leaf, blossom, or fruit. Let man confess, when he speaks of God and His operations, that he knows nothing. Hence we repeat, that if the mystery of the Holy Eucharist is not a truth of revelation, God has revealed nothing; for, to overthrow this part of the Christian system, is to overthrow all which rests on the same foundation; and the language which teaches this doctrine is so plain, that if it be misunderstood, it will be hard to guard any truth against misapprehen-

sion. Those who reject this sacrament, pre-judge the whole matter, make up their minds that they will not receive it, and then seek to explain away the testimony of Scripture, and other evidence.

The Church of Christ, which gives us truth as she received it, teaches us orally and in a living manner. She has all the authority of Christ, as His agent, and her voice has always spoken in one way in regard to the mystery of our altars, which is the very heart of religion, the consequence of the incarnation, and the mode by which the great Priest after the order of Melchisedec carries on His mediatorial work.

III. The adaptation of this Sacrament to our wants, is another evidence of its divinity, for none but God could know the abysses of the creature's wretchedness, or in so stupendous a manner provide for his need. Let no one say that human brains could have imagined such divine condescension. No mind of itself would ever have conceived it. The same hand that planned the incarnation of the eternal Son, and the cross of Calvary, planned this sacrifice, and dispenses this bread of life. All comes from the same infinite mercy, which never works by

halves, whose every step has the immensity of God. Here Jesus manifests Himself as the Redeemer, carries on His work of mediation, makes His own life flow among the dead, and God of love, gathers the ransomed to His bosom.

On the cross, He atoned for the sins of the world, but this was only to pay the penalty due to justice. The strong arm had to lift up each one of those for whom He died, and to apply to each individual soul the fruits of that passion. The mediatorial office implies all this, for in this capacity He places Himself, as victim, between the sinner and the Divine Majesty. He is the sacrifice, the one sacrifice which taketh away guilt. He presents this sacrifice continually in heaven, where the five wounds are ever open, and the blood that man shed courses in His glorified humanity. But man needs to take hold of this sacrifice, and to plead this victim before God. Since the fall, man has never been without a sacrifice, and has never dared to approach the throne of the Most High, without the visible expression of his sense of guilt and need of vicarious atonement. A religion without a sacrifice would be a novelty indeed. God Himself, in patriarchal days, and under the

minute ritual of the old law, appointed this rite. When He came on earth in our flesh, He fulfilled the preceding economies; He did not take away their truth. Shadows found their substance in Him; and the Victim, whose blood could take away sin, took the place of bulls and goats. In His capacity of victim, He abides on our altars, and is there offered by mortal men, who thus can plead before heaven the complete atonement of the cross, and render a service worthy of God. The sinner himself offers the great Mediator, and has boldness to approach unto the Holiest, through the blood of Jesus. The effect of this great oblation is to make fruitful the saving stream that gushed from Calvary, to bring down grace, repentance for the transgressor, and perseverance for the just. The mystery of redemption ceases to be a past history; it becomes an ever-present reality. The mighty steps of the Mediator are in our midst, and sin, with its roots, is dragged out of the soul, and the believer, prostrated at the foot of the cross, is made one with his offended Father. Without this sacrifice, how incomplete would redemption be! how ineffective to supply the deep wants of man!

But when Mary's Child came into the world of sin, the Light shone in darkness, the Life was among the dead. Our first father, Adam, had failed, and the curse was upon his children. The stem that budded out of the root of Jesse, was a living shoot from that dead tree. The incarnate Lord was the life, because He was God, Being, necessary and eternal; He became the life of our race, only by communicating to us the humanity which He had taken into union with His divine nature. The dying looked up to Him, and His touch quickened them with a new vitality. They arose from the bed of death, children of the Second Adam, sons of God and the resurrection. The Eucharist is the food of the new life. Here the bread which came down from heaven, is given to the pilgrim; and, by the strength of this bread, he journeys on to the mountain of God. The flesh of Jesus Christ nourishes our souls and bodies, unites us to Him from whom we draw our regenerate life, and conforms us to His likeness. Henceforth it is Christ who lives in us, who overcomes the power of sin in us, who gives us complete victory over the grave. The life is in us, and death, with all its shadows, flees away;

sin, with its burden, is expelled from the living soul; day by day Christ is more and more united to us, and sense grows dim, while faith grows bright. One day, the prince of this world shall come to us, and in us shall find nothing, when we are wholly emancipated, and translated from the kingdom of darkness to the light of the great King. Thus the thirsty drink of the fountain of living water; the famished eat the true manna, and hunger no more. Man, made in the divine image, longs for God, and God becomes his portion. There is nothing more the creature can ask, nothing more the Creator can give.

“How lovely then are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!” Here is the throne where sits Jesus, God of love, that He may gather the sinful world to His embrace. Here is the abode of the Mediator, the fountain whence flows every consolation, the stream that makes glad the city of God. “My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of my Lord; my heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.” It was not enough for Jesus to take our poor nature, to bear the ignominy of a malefactor; He cannot leave the children for whom His heart was broken; He

must abide with them still ; He must give Himself to them for their food. How in all kindly hearts love attracts love, and gentleness will soften even an enemy ! Here is Love uncreated, lavish of itself, flowing in the rocky places of our lost humanity. It is enough to move the stones to cry out, when man is so unmindful of God's condescension. Yet let us open the eyes of faith on this one day, which at least of all the days in the year, is full of praise to the Sacred Host. There abides in great humility the King of the whole earth, the Life of all that live on earth, or in heaven. Angels are kneeling perpetually around that lowly palace. They never cease their adoration. Human hearts are confounded with fear and joy. Earthly light catches a brighter ray, and seems to gather the far-off splendor of the heavenly day ; and flowers, which are the jewels of the world's magnificent attire, borrow new sweetness, when they smile so near the presence of their Maker. That great temple of which the Lamb is the light, has come down to earth, and here are opened wide the doors, that the King of glory may enter in. Yet the dispensation of glory has not come ; the passion still endures ;

meekness reigns, and gentleness triumphs. Oh, it was humility enough when He lay in Mary's arms, a little child ; but now that lowliness has found a deeper abasement—His love has made Him a prisoner. Night and day, when no eye seeth, when the song of the angelic army is hushed in silent adoration, He watcheth in His tabernacle for the souls of men ; He readeth their inward bitterness, wins the sinner by His condescension, and binds up the broken-hearted with more than a mother's tenderness. Gentle Jesus ! how shall we love Thee as we ought ? Thou art our God, our life and our all, the repose of our wearied hearts, the repairer of our lost estate, the Redeemer on whose breast we lean. We will seek Thy tabernacles, and there, in the shelter of Thy presence, Thou wilt hide us from the world, and teach us to espouse our souls to Thee alone. Here will we rest, till earth passes away, and Thou shalt show us Thy face in glory.

SERMON XXVII.

THE SIN OF PRIDE.

“ Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”—S. Luke. xviii. 14.

For the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.

THE Gospel gives us an affecting contrast between pride and humility. Two men were in the temple to pray. The one derived no benefit from his prayer, because he had nothing to ask of God, and he took the posture of supplication, only to congratulate himself that he was so superior to his fellow. The other, oppressed by his weakness, and weighed down by his sins, did not even lift up his face, but, in great humility, begged for mercy. The Lord accepted his offering, and rewarded the humble, while He turned His face against the proud. Our Saviour would have us learn by this parable, that pride is our greatest enemy—that it is, in fact, the root of all sin.

Pride was the sin of the angels, who, in heaven, rebelled against God, and fell from their principality. These celestial spirits, who sought to exalt themselves, were everlastingly humbled, cast down to hell, and bound in chains of darkness.

Pride was the sin of our first parents, who, in the garden of paradise, aspired to be like God. They were banished from Eden, cut off from the communion of their Maker, and, with all their posterity, condemned to punishment. They might have been happy in the pleasures of that supernatural state to which they had been raised; but, unequal to their trial, and seeking for gifts they had not, they fell into an abyss of woe. So it is with every intelligence that in any way raiseth itself against the Most High.

The rule of God's providence has always been as it is now, according to our Saviour's words: 'Whosoever exalteth himself shall be humbled.' These two tremendous *falls* are written for our warning, that we may not be destroyed by the enemy which proved their ruin.

Pride, my brethren, the most insidious and subtle of all temptations, is *that sin* against

whose fearful consequences this language of our Lord is directed.

We may try to trace these consequences as visited upon angels and men, but they are far too fearful for us to know them all. As hard as it is to conceive of an angel's glory, it is even harder to estimate the awful change from light to darkness, from peace to war, from love to malignant hate. Bearers of God's goodness to the universe, swift messengers of His will, they became spirits of evil, the powers of darkness, to tempt and enslave man made in the divine image. This has been their work since man fell; unquiet spirits, "walking through dry places, seeking rest and finding none;" following their leader, Satan, who, like "a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour."

Such an abasement is meant by the wonderful language of Scripture: "Thou hast been in the pleasures of the paradise of God: every precious stone was thy covering. Thou art the anointed cherub that protecteth; and I have set thee upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways

from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. Thou hast sinned, therefore will I cast thee out of the mountain of God, and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.”*

But, beloved, the abasement of our race by the sin of pride, is perhaps even more moving. Adam, who knew nothing of evil, by his own act, lost the powerful Spirit of God, who upheld him, and let in upon his soul the fearful incursion of sin, while every avenue of bodily sense became a stronghold of his insidious tempters. Oh! what a change! One moment to know nothing of sin, and the next to be under its full dominion. True, his fall changed the world without; the earth grew sterile; thorns and thistles took the place of flowers and fruits; the beasts of the field learned to be at war. But this change could not be likened to that within the soul and body of the transgressor. There, instead of peace, was the conflict of passion, and the restlessness of evil desire. The temple of the Holy Ghost had become the cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

We need, then, no proof how hateful to God

* Ezekiel, xxviii. S. Cyril, p.

is this chief sin of *pride*. We ourselves have known and felt how just and true are God's ways with our fallen race. Yet why is it that this sin has such guilt before God? why have we such marked and mysterious warnings against it? It is because that in *it* is contained the essence of all sin; and though every crime leads surely to another, yet pride seems to involve all vices in itself. The essence of religion is obedience, which subdues our wills unto the will of God, whose voice in all things we are to make our rule. Pride sets out with making self the end, instead of God, and so the proud man, in the degree that he is proud, ceases to be the servant of God. Then, when the divine will is not sought as the guide of all we do, self is the idol which rules in our hearts, and one after another good works are given up, and sins are indulged, permitted, or finally embraced. So pride leads in every way of iniquity, since, in every vice, self is the end proposed.

Even what many of us know, by sad experience of wickedness, will teach us how true this is; for still the devil's sin, and Adam's sin, is the most insidious foe of our race. From the inveterate transgressor to the most devoted fol-

lower of Jesus, who has not felt the power of this sin leading him in worldly things, in spiritual things, in works of faith, in acts of penitence, to seek himself, and not God?

I need not pause to point out how pride governs those who have not the fear of God to restrain them. Each man seeks his own advancement in the way of ambition, riches, or pleasure. Even where selfish pleasure oversteps itself and degrades the sinner, self is the end for which the apparent good is sought. There is a lofty pride and a lowly pride, as there are many ways of serving ourselves; but, in all its forms, it is the same fearful sin, directly at war with God and destructive of holiness.

Those who are really in earnest to work out their salvation, have no greater danger than that of spiritual pride. As we go on in the heavenward way, there are a thousand modes in which this sin seduces us. Our very progress, the contrast of our present with our former life, the victories which we make with God's help, inspire pride, or are apt to make us feel secure, so that, in the time of our trial, we are unprepared.

Freedom from temptation leads in itself to presumption, since we are led to think that it proceeds from our greater strength. Hope in God's promised mercy, instead of leading us to struggle more valiantly with remaining infirmity, is often used as a reason why we may neglect our wonted vigilance. Then it is a most sad truth that we may perform our religious duties with self as the end, really serving man instead of God; where to do right is honorable among our fellows, there is danger lest we seek in our own good actions the honor which cometh of men. To avoid snares like these, we need great watchfulness, close knowledge of ourselves, and strict dealing with our sins.

How many persons have seemed to make great advances in the divine life, until all of a sudden there has come a fall. It may be by some gross sin, which, known unto men, has bent them under the load of shame, and made them feel their weakness; but, in all cases, some bitter experience opens their eyes to see how they have been going their own way, and, in their religious zeal, have entirely lost sight of the goal to which they were travelling. Alas! how this insidious sin builds up itself in the

believer's heart, spoiling his best works, oppressing his holiest purposes, and corrupting the purest motives. The marks of its presence are too plain to him who seeks to know them. These marks are, despair, when we fall into sin; vexation, when we are contradicted, or lightly esteemed by others; favorable comparisons of ourselves with our neighbors; uneasiness at another's good, or gladness at another's evil; neglect of private duties, while we are careful to be strict before men; or even the choice of one duty above another, when both are clearly commanded by God. These are some of the tokens of that disease which is so subtle and yet so deadly.

In our Saviour's words, "He that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." May He give us all grace to take this warning. What need we more than humility? He who does not feel how he lacks this virtue, must be very far from the kingdom of heaven.

Now one of the best remedies against pride, is to realize these words of our Lord. He who thinks himself to be something, is really nothing. Self-exaltation is the sure way to abase-

ment. Only he who humbles himself can be exalted. Could we realize *this*, we should see how, when we are tempted to pride, there is really reason for self-condemnation. The moments when we think best of ourselves, are those which should rather increase our shame and fear. You have seen how our forefather, Adam, exalted himself, and was abased. See, now, how the Second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, is our example of humility. He, who was in the form of God, and equal with God, annihilated Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. *This* humiliation is far too stupendous for us to estimate: we can but adore in silence. God the Son became Man—*is now* very Man as He is truly God. But his humiliation went still further. Being found in form as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. When God became Man, and lived upon the earth, He lived in poverty, in sorrow, in loneliness, in contempt. “He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a redemption for many.” “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a

Name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell." Such, beloved, is our pattern of humility, and the reward of the humble is a share in the glory and dominion of Christ. Unto this pattern let us often look, we who are weak and sinful, and sorely oppressed by temptation. He, sinless, abased himself for our salvation; we, laden with sin, cannot rise but by first bending down our pride, and asking grace to tread in His steps. Let us learn of Him who is meek and lowly, and so shall we find rest to our souls. As we have borne the image of the earthly, let us bear now the image of the heavenly.

Then, as we see the consequences of man's first sin spreading themselves over all time, or look further back to the angels' fall, we shall learn how offensive to God is sin. The view of our own nothingness will tend to humble us in the dust, when, with that one primeval sin, we compare our many dark and fearful transgressions. There must be sad results flowing from our numberless offences. Besides their desolating effect upon our moral and spiritual

nature, they have crucified the Lord of glory, and led the sinless mother of God through her way of sorrows. Here let us gain a just sense of sin. If Adam rebelled, and fell by one transgression, how much lower have *we* fallen, who have slighted baptismal grace, who have unmade what Jesus had new made within us! —we who, in the Church of God, with greater gifts than those of Eden, have been cumberers of the Lord's ground?

If the humility of Jesus is our pattern, oh how much further have we to go in the road on which we have scarcely entered!

Let us begin, then, to contend against the pride of our hearts, as our chiefest enemy. Let us endeavor to mortify every evil inclination. We do not see ourselves even as others see us. We could not endure the sight which is open to the all-seeing eye.

Great is the work of subduing ourselves, which we have undertaken. The path of holiness is the path of humility. There is no other way of sanctification. When we realize our own nothingness, we shall realize the omnipotence of Christ. And this conviction cannot come to those who, gratifying every inclination,

know nothing of self-discipline. The virtue of the cross comes not to those who do not bear the cross. Religion is not a thing of theory! Beginning with the sense of our sin and need, it seeks the cleansing grace of Christ, follows in every way where strength is given, stretches out itself to the length and breadth, and depth and height, of the mercy which encompasses the children whom the Son of God makes one with Himself. Measuring his own nothingness by the all-sufficiency of grace, the Christian goes on to realize more and more his utter helplessness without Christ; and his reliance upon the atonement is no unfeeling apprehension of the crucifixion, but a quickening union with his Lord, in which every thing vanishes from his faithful eyes, save Jesus, living, suffering, rising again, reigning in heaven.



SERMON XXVIII.

THE DOCTRINE OF PURGATORY.

“Make an agreement with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him ; lest, perhaps, the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou pay the last farthing.”—S. MATTHEW, v. 25, 26.

For the Month of November.

THIS season calls our attention to that mystery of our faith which opens to us the sufferings of souls who die debtors to the divine justice, or in any way defiled by the touch of sin. Beginning this month with the contemplation of the saints in glory, we turn at once to those who are not yet made perfect—who, in pain and want, are waiting for their full purification.

To gather the full improvement of this season, and to stimulate ourselves to exertion in behalf

of the suffering souls, let us briefly examine the dogma of purgatory, and the proofs which Holy Scripture, reason, and tradition bring to its support. Then will we be prepared to receive the exhortations which charity and zeal for our own salvation should bring home to our hearts.

I. The language in which the Church teaches this doctrine, is very plain and concise. She simply tells us that there is a purgatory, and that the souls therein contained are aided by the prayers of the faithful, and especially by the Holy Sacrifice. Moreover, she commends to our devotion the wants of our brethren who have departed in the faith, and bids us often meditate for our own improvement upon the view here given of God's purity and justice. There is scarcely any contemplation more fraught with practical lessons. The existence, then, of a place of purification, or a state of suffering after death, is an article of faith. The precise nature of the pain, there inflicted upon the imperfect soul, has not been revealed. There is certainly a pain of loss, and, beyond all question, a pain of sense. The spirit, free from the flesh, loses at once the veil which, in this life, hides the true view of eternal things,

and, departing in the grace of God, longs for union with Him, with a thirst compared to which all other desire ceases to be desire ; but, in the state of imperfection, it cannot go to Him—it would not dare, and could not if it durst. There are stains of past sin to be purged, and there are obligations to punishment to be satisfied. So, pining for its first beginning and last end, it suffers a fearful restraint. Its thirst cannot be gratified, its desire becomes its own tormentor. There is no doubt that this pain alone far exceeds any sorrow • which the human mind can conceive. Besides this agony of restraint, there is also a positive anguish inflicted by God, according to the needs of each soul. We cannot tell the exact mode by which punishment is meted out, but there is every reason to believe that a fire, capable of paining and at the same time of purifying, is brought to bear upon the soul. The fire of hell has been positively revealed, and hence we conclude that the fire of purgatory must be like that, with the addition of the power of purification, for which there is no place in the region of endless torment. Some of the fathers have believed that the fire of hell is the same as

that of purgatory, with this difference: in the one case, the flame consumes the dross, and burns out the stains of sin, while, in the other, it is only an avenger, feeding upon the substance of soul and body. Various have been the descriptions of the saints, according to the view which they have principally taken of this great mystery, and yet the particulars of this awful suffering are not revealed; they await the experience of each individual soul.

Connected, however, with this dogma, is the Church's view of sin and human responsibility, which explains the whole system of morals taught by her authority. It differs widely from the opinions common among Protestants, who have not, in scarcely any respect, the same notion as we of God or His government. Sin is an offence against the divine Majesty, by the transgression of His laws. He is the Creator, and has a right to impose His will upon the creature. Regeneration gives Him another claim upon our obedience, for thus He has not only made us out of nothing, but, when we were perverted, has new made us, and washed us in His own blood.

Grave as is sin under the law of nature, it

becomes graver under the law of grace. Sins have not all the same degree of guilt, as is self-evident to any candid mind. Some are acts of purposed rebellion against God, while other spring from thoughtlessness or human frailty. Yet, every act of disobedience, great or small is an offence against our rightful Governor, and produces two effects. It creates a guilt or obligation to punishment, and leaves an evil moral impression upon the soul. The first effect flows necessarily from the divine justice, which cannot but be exact in its relations towards us. Punishment must follow sin, and cannot be averted except by atonement, or the vicarious expiation of another. Surely, they who believe in God's government at all, must, in some form, confess this; and they who believe in revelation, have only to cast their eye upon the blood-stained hill of Calvary, to feel its full force. History, and the experience of every soul, demonstrate forcibly this truth. No nation, no individual, has been a transgressor, without being a sufferer. Sin and sorrow are bound up together in the records of our fallen race.

The second effect follows from the very na-

ture of our being. As every good action leaves its good impression upon the soul, so every deviation from the rule of right is deeply felt in the heart of the actor. No stringed instrument is half so delicate to the touch, as is our spiritual nature to the impressions of good and evil. There is something degrading and polluting about sin. It lowers the whole man, and seems to leave behind it a stain which only tears of sorrow and contrition can wash away. Conscience attests the truth of this assertion, so that there is no sinner who can say that he has not felt degraded, even in his wildest career of crime. To a soul who has never grievously sinned, the first great offence seems heavier than the weight of a mountain, and darker than the stain of blood. To say any thing else, would be to make man a mere machine or a brute. The brute follows his instincts, because he has no higher law. A machine in the hands of an operator, may be the instrument of violence or death, but there is no moral quality to its actions, because it is a dead mass without an intellectual soul. Such is not man, who is made in the image of God. Faith illumines these truths so consonant to our natural reason.

Every sin of man must be punished. The Son of God has made an atonement, and applies it to the penitent, but not to leave us sinful, or to take away our moral responsibility. Once for all, in the new birth, He forgives all, and makes us His children. Such is His own word. Then He has not diminished, but rather increased our accountability. Sins against the light must all be punished as they deserve. Some deserve eternal pain, and for this degree of guilt He has provided a remedy, a sacrament where, to the contrite, He remits the endless penalty, and restores the state of grace; but, for pain in time, the natural consequence of disobedience, He has prepared no sacrament. It must be endured, or atoned for by extraordinary acts of contrition. The stain left upon the soul will last, till cleansed by the tears of salutary anguish, or consumed by the refiner's fire. This world is the sphere for punishment, as well as probation. But if the hour of death overtake us, still polluted by sin, still under obligation to punishment, what shall we do? There is, through the divine mercy, a place for our purification, an abode of suffering, where our imperfections may be atoned for, and God's attributes viin-

dedicated. This is the sphere of purgatory; the contrivance of the divine mercy, which, seeking to draw the human soul to Himself, first makes it pure; the invention of divine wisdom which, exacting obedience to the last farthing prepares for man's frailty and His own perfection.

It will readily be seen here how the Church, in all this doctrine, supports a true morality. She demands obedience to the law of God; and it is self-evident that, if there be any divine law, its fulfilment must be required. Either it is a law or not. If it be a law, it must be binding upon the subject; and then a partial obedience is disobedience, in so far as it fails to keep every commandment. God governs by rewards and punishments, and this is even implied in the necessary sanctions of any law. Moreover, the justice which, under the new law, God gives, is a real justice, such as He requires, according to the words of S. Paul, "that the justification of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." The Catholic doctrine of inherent justice only vindicates the attributes of God, in giving to regenerate man a real sanc-

tity. And we may say it is the only doctrine consistent with morality. Either man justified is really just, or he is not. If he is not just, God cannot call him so, for if He did, He would call him what he is not. To cover over the sinner, would be something like an attempt to deceive. Heaven would be no place for him, were he unholy; and the eternal reward could not be his portion, if he had not earned it. The doctrine of purgatory is in strict accordance with the true and just morality which the Church preaches—a system which exacts real holiness, and makes the Creator's law operative upon the creature. The atonement of the Son of God is in accordance with the nature of the divine Being. It restores the fallen man to the state of grace, and puts him on probation for endless beatitude. It does not cover over his sinfulness, or call him what he is not. This would contradict God's justice, and preach even license to the free agent. For no one could resist the conclusion that the justified man is either responsible for his actions, or not. If he be loaded with depravity which he cannot overcome, how can he be responsible? If he be responsible, how can he escape the conse-

quences of his own deeds? They who preach salvation without good works, preach irreligion; they who take from sin its just punishment, besides contradicting the law of all intelligent agents, give encouragement to crime. So, on close inspection, we find that the doctrine of purgatory is founded upon the most evident principles of our nature, and is in harmony with the revealed system of justification.

II. The proofs which we are able to bring forward for our present purpose, can be only an outline of the argument to be adduced from the three great fountains of authority.

§ 1. Holy Scripture affords plain testimony, which it will be hard to gainsay, which ought to be sufficient for such as believe in the inspiration of the divine word. There are many passages in the Old Testament which refer to the intermediate state of souls after death, as a state of sorrow or purification; but, at this moment it will be enough for us to notice two or three texts which have a direct bearing upon our subject. In the second book of the Machabees, twelfth chapter, we have the following history: Judas, the deliverer of the Jewish people, had just gained a battle against his enemies. The

day after the victory, he came with his company to take away his own dead, and to bury them in the sepulchres of their fathers. And behold they found under the garments of some of the slain, votive offerings of the idols of Jamnia; so that all plainly saw that for this cause they were destroyed. Then, to use the language of the inspired writer, "they blessed the just judgments of the Lord, who had discovered the things that were hidden. And so, betaking themselves to prayers, they besought Him that the sin which had been committed might be forgotten. But the most valiant Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves from sin. And making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem, for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection; and because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness had great grace laid up for them. It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins."*

It would be difficult to find a plainer state-

* 2 Machabees, xii. 40-46.

ment of our doctrine and practice. These unfortunate Jews died fighting for the cause of religion, and hence there was reason to hope that they might be excused from mortal sin through ignorance, or, at least, might have repented before death. They had fallen asleep with godliness, and were presumed to have died in the state of grace; hence there was hope that their sin might be expiated, and, therefore, the necessity of offering sacrifices for them. The whole passage is utterly meaningless to those who reject the dogma of purgatory, while, in almost our very language, it supports the Catholic teaching. We pray and offer now the Holy Sacrifice for those of our brethren who have fallen asleep in Jesus, fortified by the sacraments, and sealed with the seal of faith. For the utterly reprobate we pray not, because, in hell, there is no redemption; but we know that those who have departed in the state of grace are suffering their purification for all their lesser sins and imperfections. We come to their succor, moved by natural love, and by the charity which makes us one in Christ. While we can pray, while we have in our hands the great sacrifice of the Victim of

the cross, we can render them seasonable aid.

The adversaries of our doctrine, seeing how plain is the testimony of this passage, answer by denying the inspiration of the book of Machabees. To this we reply, although this is not the place for making issue with the objector: Firstly, the Church, which is the only competent judge, has settled the matter in her general councils of Florence and Trent. If we look for mere human authority, we shall never, perhaps, be at agreement; though, for mere weight of testimony, the opinion of the early fathers—of Clement, S. Ambrose, and S. Augustine—ought to be more valuable than all modern objections. The Catholic does not think himself competent to determine upon the inspiration of the books of Holy Scripture. If he did, he could not in conscience ask anybody else to agree with him, for, other things being equal, the mere opinion of one man is as good as that of another. He leaves this matter to the Author of his faith; and as he does not make his own creed, neither does he make his own Bible. Secondly, whatever view be taken of this question, the passage

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proves beyond all doubt the doctrine and practice of the Jews. Judas was the high-priest and defender of the faith, and acts in accordance with the common belief of his countrymen. He could not have innovated in a practical matter like this, where there was a spontaneous oblation for the dead. Where, then, did he derive this belief, unless by tradition? Even non-Catholic commentators admit that the Jews were in the habit of praying for the dead,—admitting thereby a purgatory for the departed. The tradition of the people of Israel, who, till Christ came, were the true Church of God, will go far towards establishing the divine authority of our doctrine.

In the fifth chapter of S. Matthew, we find the following language, used by our Lord in His great sermon on the mount: “Make an agreement with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest, perhaps, he deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou pay the last farthing.”* Here we must observe that when our Lord came

* S. Matthew, v. 25, 26.

upon earth, the Jews believed, as we have seen, in an intermediate state of expiation. Had they been wrong in this matter, it would have been His duty, as the teacher of truth, to have, in some way, rebuked them for their error. This He does not, but rather presupposes their very doctrine as a ground of exhortation. The most common interpretation of the fathers refers this whole passage to that strict penalty which, in the other life, we must pay to the divine justice. While we are in the way—that is, while we are in this life—we are to seek agreement with our adversary, for, after death, there will be no place for mercy. To say the very least, S. Cyprian, S. Ambrose, and Origen, were nearer the apostolic day, and are more likely to know the true meaning of our Lord's words, uninfluenced by any controversies which have unhappily arisen since their day.

There is another text in which our Lord refers to the possibility of expiation in the life to come: "He that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come."* It is easy here to say that we have only a strong expres-

* S. Matthew, xii. 32.

sion declaring that this sin could never be forgiven ; but such expressions, which imply exaggeration, are not in accordance with the style of Him whose every word contained some truth. Besides, He calls up at once the belief of those whom He addressed, and if there were no place after death for the remission of lesser sins, His language would have no meaning. He should have left out the latter phrase, and have simply said, "He that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him." S. Augustine and S. Gregory directly gather the doctrine of purgatory from these words. One tells us that they would not be true, if some sins were not forgiven in the world to come ; while the other says that, from this passage, we are to believe in the existence of the fire of purgatory, to expiate our smaller offences before the day of judgment. S. Bernard, speaking of heretics, who do not believe in purgatory, bids them inquire of our Saviour, what He meant by these words. It is not for us to argue this passage at any length. Such has been the common interpretation among Christians, till the Protestant reformation, and those who explain away this text are forced to accuse our Lord of employing

unmeaning language. Nay, we will go further, and say, that if the doctrine of purgatory be not true, the Son of God used words likely to deceive. For He knew well the Jewish belief, and the natural conclusions which would flow from His expression.

We pass to a quotation from S. Paul, in which the doctrine of purgatory seems to be delivered in almost our very words: "If any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble: every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire: and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."* The plain meaning of this passage is, that the imperfect works of Christians shall be tried by fire. They are in the state of grace; they have built upon the true foundation. The fire tries their building. Gold, silver, precious stones, abide the test; and, exposed to the flame, become even purer.

* 1 Cor., iii. 11-15.

Wood, hay, and stubble are consumed. The imperfections of the regenerate soul are burned away, and the soul is saved, because it is really filled with charity; and its work, though unable to stand the scrutiny of divine justice, was yet reared upon the corner-stone, with a true faith in Christ Jesus. Such is the general interpretation of the Catholic fathers: indeed, these very words were expounded in the Council of Florence, as establishing the doctrine of purgatory. Yet there are several considerations which render our view almost the necessary explication of the verse. The apostle evidently is speaking of sins, or of failure in obedience to the law of God, and yet he does not include great crimes which destroy the life of grace in the soul, because the true foundation is still preserved. He who dies in mortal sin, is in no way united to Christ, the true foundation. Gold, silver, and precious stones, durable and costly, well represent the good works which, through the divine grace, are meritorious of reward. Wood, hay, and stubble aptly illustrate the frail value of deeds either imperfect in themselves, or wrought through an unworthy motive. It is not in this life that the fire shall thus try every man's

work, since the day of the Lord shall make the declaration. It must then be after death, which is often called the day, or the hour of the Lord. Then the fire which consumes the wood, hay, and stubble, is not to consume the individual who has built it upon the right foundation. Rather because of this fire he is saved, for he could never enter heaven with these imperfections; so that the flame which burns away his faults is his salvation. And we may ask, where is there any such fire which may be said to have a saving power? The pains of hell consume indeed, but do not save. In purgatory alone, according to the Catholic doctrine, is there a place of purification, where pain expiates lesser offences, and cleanses the soul from defilement. All pain, according to God's providence, is purifying, and eminently so when, after death, the soul is so earnest to improve it. Here penitential inflictions are often lost, for our negligence, or unwillingness to correspond with the divine plans. In the life to come, every anguish tells upon the faithful, and, like the refiner's fire, consumes the dross. If such be not the meaning of S. Paul's language, we are at a loss to give any reasonable interpretation of them;

for surely there is no other fire which may be said in any way to save the soul. It will be difficult to explain away the natural force of this passage, even if it were reverent thus to treat the Holy Scripture.

§ 2. We cannot pause long upon the argument to be drawn from *tradition*. Those who feel the force of this argument, need no proof of our doctrine; and, even putting aside the divine authority of the Church, there is a power in the fact of prescription, if Christianity has any history, and be not the thing of a day. According to its very name, it ought to be as old as its Founder; and to have come down from Him, must have a history on earth. Now, we cannot comprehend the consistency of those who call themselves Christians, and at the same time see fit to reject what Christians have always believed. Go back to the day of the apostles, through all the ages, and you will find in every day the doctrine of purgatory held as one of the unquestioned truths of religion. The Church of Christ could not teach error, for by doing so she would cease to represent the Son of God. And the mere fact that a doctrine has been taught from the earliest days, is a proof of

its divine origin. No one can tell us the time when the Church did not believe in purgatory. Everywhere she has held up that place of patient suffering to the warning of her children, and always has offered for the departed the sacrifice of Christ. No practice is more evident in every stage of her history, than that of praying for the dead. It is a practice commended by even natural charity, urged by the examples of the saints, and dear to every Catholic heart. You could not take away this privilege from the faithful, without materially changing their religion. To say that this practice is a corruption of modern times, is to make a groundless assertion, incapable of any proof, and contradicted by every fact of authentic history. From S. Cyprian's day to S. Augustine's, from S. Gregory to S. Bernard, there is one unwavering testimony. In every liturgy, prayer is offered for the faithful departed ; at every altar Mass is said for their repose ; wherever the cross upon the tombstone points out the resting-place of one who died in faith, there has the Catholic knelt to pray that the God of mercy would hasten the hours of purification, and admit the suffering soul to light eternal, to unending rest.

But, in this connection, we ought to adduce the Jewish tradition, to which we have already referred. The book of Machabees, as well as the testimony of Rabbinical writers, establishes the fact that the people of Israel, who, before Christ came, had the oracles of truth, were accustomed to pray for the departed. Even non Catholic authorities admit this. In addition, we have the certainty that even now the Jews, scattered and degraded as they are, offer petitions for the dead, and hold to a middle place of purification. Those who wish to be fully persuaded of this, need only consult their liturgical books,* where prayer is made for the departed, where even children are taught to supplicate the Divine goodness, for the souls of their parents. With this fact before us, it is an unanswerable argument, that our Lord and His apostles do not contradict the tradition of the Jews, but rather, as we have seen, suppose its truth, and argue directly in its support.

§ 3. We pass then to the evidence of natural reason. It is quite a common thing for the objectors to our faith to assert that Catholic doctrine is unreasonable. We ask them, why? and

* Bartolocci, II., p. 149.

they can only answer that it goes against their preconceived opinions. Perhaps it may turn out that these opinions are inconsistent with the testimony of right reason. If they will have patience to listen, and fairness to admit what is self-evident, they may be convinced.

It should be understood that, though faith is above reason, the supernatural light never contradicts the natural, because both are from God; and hence there is nothing in man, rightly interpreted, which gainsays any revealed truth. Reason does not, of itself, prove the faith revealed, but there is no jarring, and there are often strong points which show how certainly the creator of the human intelligence is the author of revelation. We propose to adduce two arguments which rely upon the sanctity and justice of God, attributes which are involved in the very idea of a Supreme Being. It is impossible for reason to deny the existence of God, since the very attempt to dispute this fundamental truth would only establish it. If there is no Supreme Intelligence, there is no created intelligence. The moral government of God is also an admitted fact, testified to by experience and the convictions of every human

heart. Reward and punishment are then necessities in the scheme of our probation, and according to strict principles. If any one receive a reward which he has not deserved, it is not a reward but a free gift. If any one be punished for a wrong he has not committed, our whole nature revolts at the injustice; and we feel that God cannot be the author of such a system of dealing with mankind. Here, therefore, without entering further into this question, we look directly at the state of the soul after death. Even reason admits that there are degrees of sin which merit an unending pain, and preclude the hope of reconciliation; and yet there is guilt which does not condemn the soul to an eternal separation from God, the author of its life and happiness. What is to be done with such cases? Are they to be cut off from the reward which their good works deserve? Are they to be forever excluded from heaven? They must be, unless there is a place of purification—for nothing defiled, not even one imperfection, can go into the Divine presence. Nothing is more self-evident than this. The sanctity of God rejects

every touch of impurity. As far the majority of Christians die imperfect, this becomes a most practical matter. As they die, so they go to judgment. Death works no moral change in them. As the sanctity of God excludes them from heaven, so the justice of God keeps them from hell ; since, dying in true contrition and faith, they do not deserve the everlasting fire. So the human mind conjectures that the Lord of love will find a place for their cleansing, and prepare them for His embrace in due time.

Again, the souls who depart this life imperfect, deserve some punishment. They have not paid all they owe, for, by transgression, a heavy debt has been accumulated. Equal justice cannot dispense with this debt, and the divine attributes cannot be satisfied, till it be cancelled. Where, then, is the soul which expires in the peace of Christ to be punished for its lesser offences, which have not been expiated? Not in heaven, which is the place of reward : not in hell, which is the abode of the lost. We have a difficulty raised by pure reason, which is not solved, unless there be a middle place where the soul may expiate

its guilt, and pay to the last farthing what is due. Then, free from obligation, it may wing its way to the centre of life and bliss.

Such are plain deductions of natural reason which go to support the Catholic doctrine. Let the objector examine well the grounds of his own belief, and he will see, perhaps, how much more unreasonable it is than any view we have advanced. Let him remember, what is very often forgotten, that our faith is the old one. We have not advanced any thing new. He has brought forth either a new opinion, or, taking away our belief, has put nothing at all in the place of it. If he can tell us nothing about the state of the departed, is this satisfactory to immortal beings who are travelling with rapid steps towards the grave? Does he tell us that the soul sleeps till the day of judgment? This is simply an impossibility, for the disembodied spirit cannot sleep. Life with growth is its law. Does he tell us that, a death, we must all go either to heaven or hell? This again is repugnant to reason, for the imperfect cannot go to heaven, nor can they go to eternal pain, which they do not merit. This opinion opens heaven to every one, and then

there is no heaven at all ; or, it shuts it up, and unbars the gates of hell, to receive all mankind. Does the objector finally tell us that there is an intermediate state of rest and refreshment, where the just are confined till the day of account ? We answer, what is the need of such a place, now that Christ has ascended to open the Father's kingdom to all believers ? What shall now keep the wholly justified soul from his Redeemer and his God ? And, secondly, this place would not answer the end, since it is neither a place of purification nor of expiation. It is open, therefore, to the same objections as the view of those who admit no intermediate state whatever.

Where is then the difficulty in receiving the Catholic doctrine, if it be supported by Scripture, tradition, and reason ? Is it hard to believe ? We cannot understand how it presents any greater difficulty to the mind than the dogma of eternal pain. Is not a temporary fire as reasonable as an unending one ? Do those who believe in the one, find it hard to receive the other ? No ; the simple truth is, that the objectors, refusing the Catholic faith without any examination, turn to prejudice and passion

for their arguments. If they would first really understand our doctrine, they would not feel such repugnance towards us. And, from the day when purgatory was left out of the Protestant standards, which at first embraced it the doctrine of hell has gradually vanished, until it has begun to lose its hold upon the minds of men. All is uncertain with them, when once the grave is reached ; they have nothing to tell you of the soul's destiny. An offspring of their unbelief is the prevailing infidelity of our day, which does away, in words at least, with any retribution, turns the future life into a mere heathen elysium, and makes God's moral government a myth.

III. We conclude by a brief exhibition of the moral influence of our doctrine, and the effect it has upon all good Catholics. The belief in the fire of purgatory tends directly to holiness, and cannot, by any abuse, produce any other result. First of all, it places in the most striking manner before the mind, the accountability of the creature to God. There is no escape from punishment, if we sin. Either in this life or the next, we must suffer for every wrong we do. God's great sanctity is most feelingly im-

pressed upon the heart, and we are made to realize that we are in the hands of Him who is a "consuming fire."

There is no thought more pregnant with moral lessons. We cannot but here contrast the different ways in which the Catholic and the Protestant deals with sin. The latter meets the transgressor, who asks, what he shall do to be saved. Different kinds of Protestants will give different answers, but substantially they all will respond, "Repent of your iniquity, and then believe that God, through Christ, has forgiven you. You will try to be good, but you can never become so, because all you do will be tainted by evil; and when you die, God will take you to heaven, not because you deserve to go there, but because Christ will answer in your stead, and His obedience will make good your disobedience." We ask any candid mind, to tell us where there is even morality to be found in this system of justification. The sinner cannot become really good. Why should he try? All his hope is hung upon the conviction of his own heart, that he believes in Christ. May he not be deceived in this respect, especially as he has no good works by which to earn a title to

heaven? And how is he, unholy, to ascend to the hill of the Lord, where they only can come who are clean of hands and pure of heart?

How different from this is the Catholic mode of reconciliation with God! We say to the sinner, repent sincerely of your sin, but your contrition must embrace a sorrow of heart for having offended God, a detestation of the wrong you have done, and a firm purpose to offend no more. You cannot do this in your own strength, but He who has moved you to seek the way of salvation, will guide you by His grace. By this repentance, you become converted; but this is not sufficient for pardon. You must confess all your sins, and seek absolution where God has appointed, and in a sacrament where grace will reinstate you in the way of peace. Then, after forgiveness, follows satisfaction, and a life of good works, which, wrought in the divine strength, will expiate for past neglect, and merit eternal happiness.

Though of yourself you can do nothing, by the constant help of God you can do all things. When you are justified, you are not in solemn mockery called what you are not, but you are really made just, and you receive that grace

which enables you to keep the law, and do works really good in the Divine sight. So you will be judged by the deeds done in the body, and by your life you will be rewarded or condemned. God will look strictly at all your actions, and as He has done a real work in you, will demand a real obedience. Heaven or hell will be your eternal abode, according to your free choice; and if the hour of death find you imperfect, you must suffer in purgatory till pain has cast out what is vile, and made you meet for the feet of the All-holy.

Who can doubt that this system tends to holiness? We do require good works for salvation, but works instinct with faith, hope, and love. There are, no doubt, Catholics who are formalists, but they are self-deceivers, who receive no encouragement from us. We demand from the sinner an entire conversion from the ways of sin, and a sincere, humble walk of piety with God. We promise him salvation on no other terms. And as for indulgences, so much misunderstood by Protestants, it is enough to say in this connection that they have nothing to do with the pardon of sin, but are good works, tending to atone for past neglect, to pay

the penalty which may be due to divine justice. And they must be performed with greatest sincerity and for the holiest motive.

Upon Catholics themselves, the influence of the belief in purgatory cannot but be wholesome. They cannot shut from their eyes, in the busy round of human affairs, or amid the attractions of pleasure, the scene of suffering which, beyond the grave, awaits the tepid or careless Christian. There rolls the lake of fire where, in patient, speechless agony, the just endure their superhuman woe, till the refiner's fire has wrought its full effect, and completed their purification. Such is the God whom we serve, whom nothing unholy can approach, who yearns to bring the creature into union with Himself, but finds no way to accomplish it, while there is the least defilement in the soul. By such a faith we are stimulated to strict lives, to careful self-examination, to vigilance in good works. There is no encouragement to the indolent, since even these salutary fires are the portion of only such as depart in the state of grace and in sincere charity with God. If the just Governor of all treat with such severity those who are amenable to His justice for slight

imperfections, how bitter must be the cup of the unrepenting sinner in the hell of the lost, from which there is no escape! So it is that in those who walk according to its precepts, our religion proves its divine origin, and everywhere, in the saints, in the imperfect, in the disobedient, vindicates the attributes of the Most High. So, everywhere, God gains glory, to whom alone be praise and dominion forever. Amen.

SERMON XXIX.

THE PATRONAGE OF S. JOSEPH.

“Thou shalt be over My house, and at the commandment of thy mouth all the people shall obey ; only in the kingly throne will I be above thee.”—GENESIS, xli. 40.

For the Feast of the Patronage of S. Joseph.

THE blessed Virgin Mary, mother of God, has a throne above the glory of all the saints, for she is not only united to the great King by grace, but she is also His mother. No creature can approach to that dignity, which elevates her above all intelligences, by reason of her parentage of the Word made flesh. Yet, next to her in the celestial court, is the saint most nearly related to her, her spouse and protector, the meek and holy Joseph. Like all the elect, he is great by the divine gifts, and by the measure of His union with Christ. The Church presents him to us as our model in the way of virtue, and as a kind father, to lead us through

the trials of our pilgrimage. Devotion to him is a great means of sanctification, and his protection a certain security in the hour of danger. A brief consideration of his sanctity, his relation to our Lord, and his virtues, will tend to convince us of his great power with God.

No saint has ever excelled him in purity, in abnegation of self, or in humility. His near relation to the Son of God demanded all these virtues. It was meet that the youthful virgin should have a protector to whose care the treasures of God might be safely committed, one who should watch over the infancy of our Lord, and be a solace in the great sorrows of her maternity. So the heart of this greatest and purest of the patriarchs was prepared for the work which was designed for him. All the virtues of the old law, which had shown so brightly in the elder saints, found their fulness in him. The dignity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, passed over to him, as in his soul were reflected the graces which had made them so powerful with God. He was also to represent the Eternal Father on earth, and so to wear something of the majesty of the Ancient of Days. He was, from his infancy, under the especial care of the

angels, who taught him that the days of promise were drawing nigh, and guided him to seek more fervently for the consolation of Israel. His espousals to the blessed Virgin were the first reward which God granted him, as well as His first duty in the economy of the incarnation. These espousals were a new consecration to the divine service, as the holy child who stood up to claim him as her betrothed was dedicated by solemn vow to the Almighty, and S. Joseph well understood how the rights of the divine bridegroom were to be jealously guarded. To tell the story of Bethlehem, is to tell the story of his virtues. When the angel had assured him of the conception of our Lord, through the power of the Holy Ghost, he stood up with his pure and manly soul to shield the lowly virgin and the fruit of her womb.

He was with her in the journey to the city of David, where David's King was to be born, and became the guardian of the poor cave where Mary brought forth her Child and her God. On that night he was watcher with the angelic army, and first, after the holy mother, to adore the incarnate Lord. The sorrows of

the infant Jesus were shared by him in patience and love. The flight into Egypt, and the exile from the Holy Land, were all endured with heroic resignation. When persecution ceased for a time, and Nazareth became his home, his days were passed in lowly poverty, as the hard labor of his trade barely sufficed for the support of the holy family. Who can tell what lessons of wisdom he learned from the lips of his foster-child, or how he increased in holiness and love, as the hours of his pilgrimage ran on? The holy house was indeed an image of heaven, filled with its light and breathing its peace. At last, when every duty was done, he went to sleep in the arms of Jesus, sheltered by Mary's prayers. The line of the patriarchs was complete when he went up to the chamber of the fathers, to tell them of the light that had arisen in Jacob, and of their speedy entrance into the rest prepared for the people of God. Among all who went before him, none can be found more excellent in virtue. Among all who shall come after him, none shall be found more humble and pure. The Church brings him before us as crowned with his own peculiar glory among the saints, as having an especial power

of intercession with the Son of God in His mediatorial kingdom. So are applied to him the words of the Egyptian monarch to his type or forerunner: "Thou shalt be over My house, and at the commandment of thy mouth all the people shall obey; only in the kingly throne will I be above thee." He was placed over the house of his Lord on earth, as its ruler and guardian. So in heaven shall he retain his dignity, and at his command all the people shall obey. "Who thinkest thou," says our Lord, "is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord has appointed over his family, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom, when his Lord shall come, he shall find so doing. Amen, I say to you, he shall place him over all his goods."*

The reign of the saints in heaven is a consequence of the incarnation, and the change which it has effected in our nature. They who do not realize this, know very little of the work which our Lord has wrought. When Almighty God undertook the redemption of our race, the least end He could propose was the restoration of the gifts of Eden. The greatest of these gifts was

* S. Mark, xxiv. 46, 47.

communion with God. The first Adam was a living soul, living by the Divine life, by which alone the soul lives. He walked in the garden, where the Most High conversed with him as with a friend. He was the child of God. It was then a necessity in the redemption to bring back this state of original peace; and sin must fall before the Redeemer. Sin, in its two effects of moral defilement and obligation to punishment, must be eradicated. The soul must not only be forgiven, it must also be made clean. But the magnificent plan of a God-man did not stop here. Where sin abounded, grace has superabounded. When God took our nature, we can never rightly estimate the height to which He raised it. Thus S. Paul prays for his disciples, that the eternal Father "might give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation," that their eyes, being enlightened, they might know the hope of His calling, and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; and what is the exceeding greatness of His power towards those who believe, according to the operation of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, raising Him up from the dead, and

setting Him on His right hand in the heavenly places, above all principality and power, and virtue and dominion. For, says the apostle, "He who is rich in mercy hath quickened us when we were dead in sins, and hath raised us up with Christ, and made us sit together in the heavenly places."* Eden, with its fair flowers and celestial gifts, was only a type of that better paradise which the Redeemer has opened for us, where the vision of God Himself and perfect union are vouchsafed to us through Christ. The incarnation elevates our nature to that temple above, where the Divine substance is the light and life. First, our manhood has gone up in the person of Jesus Christ; secondly, to His sacred person are united all His members whom, in heaven, the attraction of His human heart draws closely to Himself. Before He had come down to earth, the gates of heaven were not opened to believers. "No man had ascended into heaven but He that descended, the Son of man, who is in heaven." But when He ascended, the mansions prepared for the saints were opened, the long expectation of prophets and patriarchs ceased, the princes

* Ephesians, i., 16-21 ; ii., 5-7.

of the old Canaan entered into the rest prepared for the people of God. So says S. Paul; the heroes of faith, of whom the world was not worthy, "received not the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be perfected without us."* That better thing was the grace flowing from the incarnation, the perfect redemption of our humanity. Then, when the justification of Christ was perfect, when the victory over death and hell was complete, what could keep the wholly purified soul from the arms of its Redeemer? The bars of the grave were broken, and the celestial thrones were offered to those who had followed Him in the regeneration. The saints went up to their home, to join in the new song of Moses and the Lamb, the song of the redeemed. Where the Lamb is, there are His children, the fruits of His sacrifice, the partakers of His bleeding flesh and His most precious blood; and, in the kingdom where they have gone up, they have begun their eternal reign. "To him that overcometh, will I give to sit down with Me on My throne, as I have overcome and have sat down with My Father

* Hebrews, xi. 39, 40.

on His throne.”* Now, to reign with Christ, signifies a real power, and a true participation in the kingdom over which the Son of man is seated. Words of God are not unmeaning; least of all are they less significant than the letter implies. If Christ is king by a real and true dominion, then His saints, who are to share in His royal prerogative, are rightly crowned. And over what do they reign? To one faithful over five talents, our Lord promises dominion over many things. “Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”† The mediatorial kingdom is the empire of the regeneration, by which the incarnate Word reconciles all things in Himself, and in which He conforms to God every rebel intelligence which shall be willing in the day of His power. “There He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet.”‡ United with Him, the saints employ their powers as in adoration; so in supplication around that Sacred Heart, where there is but one interest or one will. And so, day by day, the great King

* Apocalypse, iii. 21. † S. Matthew, xxv. 23.

‡ 1 Cor., xv. 25.

wins His victories as in the valley of earth, where the battle still rages ; so in the suffering realm of purgatory, when, hour after hour, the golden gates are opened to receive another of the wholly ransomed and purified. So, by intercession, is kept up the active communion of the saints in heaven, with all Christ's members ; and the Sacred Heart, beating in every regenerate bosom, struggles and is straitened, till all are brought home to their unending rest. " So the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascends up ever before God."

Now, in this great temple, where there is no need of the light of the sun, where praise and prayer never cease, there are many mansions, and star differeth from star in glory. There He who is ever true fulfils His word, and they who enter into His joy receive of His fulness, according to their merits. Apostles have their thrones of judgment over the twelve tribes of Jacob ; confessors, the especial reward of their heroism ; virgins are close to the Lamb in His nuptial embrace ; patriarchs and prophets are admitted to their own share in His kingly dominion ; and every member of the body which is instinct with His life, has its appropriate

place in His empire. There, then, of necessity, are ever new the mysteries of Bethlehem. There, on an emerald throne, surpassing all created light in brilliancy, sits the mother and queen, far above all creatures in the immediate splendor of the great King. This is the lowly virgin, before whom once knelt, with his Ave Maria, the archangel Gabriel; this is the seraphic child who, one night, when all earth was dark, and all heaven was bright, gave birth, in a stable, to her God. You can trace in the ecstatic features of the mother, the likeness of Him who sits on the throne, gleaming with the jasper and sardine-stone, where the emerald rainbow flashes its consuming fire. Across the sea of glass like crystal, where the seven lamps are ever burning, you can see how tears have departed from every eye, how the once sorrowful mother has become the glad queen of the redeemed. And there, standing by her side, "a pillar in the temple of his God," is the meek and holy Joseph, the pure spouse of the virgin, the protector of Jesus and Mary. The long journey to Bethlehem, the sorrows of the flight into Egypt,

the labor of the hidden life at Nazareth, have now their reward. The holy family is translated to heaven, and he who bore on earth the image of the Ancient of Days, is exalted to the joys of Him who is faithful and true, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. "Is not this Joseph the carpenter, the reputed husband of Mary, the foster-father of Jesus?" "Who is this faithful and wise servant whom his Lord has appointed over His family?" This is He to whom the King said, "Thou shalt be over My house, and at the commandment of thy mouth, all the people shall obey." He was faithful here below over that house, when against its treasures the world opened its persecution; he is faithful in heaven, where all his love and all his interests are with the mother and Child over whom once he extended the shield of his pure protection. He who rules in the armies of angels, He whose heart still beats for the salvation of man, hears his voice of prayer, as once He listened to the words which represented to Him the will of the eternal Father. He has not forgotten the sound of that voice which once He obeyed so

willingly, nor the look of those paternal eyes, which, through Him, were ever uplifted to the vision of God.

Well then may the Church celebrate the patronage of S. Joseph. He is her protector for she is the house and family of God, and He is the guardian of the home where his Foster child abides. He will dispense the graces of Bethlehem and Calvary in due season. He is the husbandman whom the Lord has appointed over all His goods. So will he watch and pray at the gate of the holy house, lest thieves and robbers enter in ; so will he guard the walls of Zion, lest the watchmen who stand upon it fail ; so will he uphold the anointed hands through which the Lamb dispenses the bread of life ; so ever stand at Mary's side the unfailing defender of those who love her, and through her adore in truth the incarnate God. In every shadow of our pilgrimage, he is a shield and buckler. Temptations flee before his footsteps ; the ills of life, touched by his hands, are turned into blessings ; and grateful songs ascend even in the night where the music of his intercession is heard. Then, when the king of terrors draws nigh, and the darkness of the grave appals the

fainting soul, he is the angel of peace. His is a heart which never knew fear, and, in the likeness of his own happy death, he reposes his children on the bosom of Jesus, and Mary crowns their last prayer with her intercession.

“Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and soul.

“Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, assist me in my last agony.

“Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, let my soul depart in peace, in your blessed company. Amen.”

SERMON XXX.

THE WORSHIP OF THE SACRED HEART.

"But one of the soldiers opened His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water."—S. John, xix. 34.

For the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

PERHAPS there is no devotion of our religion more touching than that by which we directly worship the Sacred Heart of our Lord. It is a devotion demanded by every motive of love and gratitude, as well as the most moving expression of tenderness towards Him who so loved us as to die for us. The Church would be an unfaithful spouse of her bleeding Bridegroom, if she failed to urge upon her children this duty of affection, which now, in later days, our Lord especially demands, and to which He has promised rich rewards of grace. So, in the solemnities of that dear festival, in which we gather with our holiest praise around the lowly throne

of the Sacred Host, and send up our adorations to the Divine Sacrament, we kindle our own weak hearts with fire from the Mercy-seat, and learn new lessons of love.

Heart answers to Heart, as, drawn by the attractive power of Jesus, our affections go up in their strength to the bosom of Love incarnate. Angels ascend and descend on the ladder of grace, as, kneeling before the Son of God in His last and greatest condescension, the believer is quickened into a life supernatural, where the shadows of sense are put to flight, and the verities of faith are the only realities. The Heart of Jesus is the furnace of love which inflames our hearts, quickens into action all our energies, and moves to deeds of heroic virtue. So, prostrate before the Victim of salvation, we are touched by a coal from God's own altar, and awake in the embrace of our incarnate Lord. He touches us not by grace alone; He comes Himself, giving of His own plenitude eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to love.

Let us reflect then for a few moments upon the worship we owe to the Sacred Heart, its place in the devotions of the Church, and its effect upon the Christian soul.

I. It must be well understood that, in this devotion, the object of our adoration is the very Heart of our Lord, as it beat in His bosom, and was the centre of His human organism. No doubt the heart is the symbol of affection, and, in some sense, the seat of feeling; still it is not in a symbolical manner that we adore the Sacred Heart. We worship it as part of that humanity which He united inseparably to His Godhead, and directly adore it, with the same adoration we pay to the ever-blessed Trinity. The Church has decided that there is no difference between our worship of the Divinity and that we owe to the humanity of Christ. The truth of the incarnation makes all things clear. God became man. "The Word was made flesh." The second Person of the Godhead has two natures,—the divine, by which He is consubstantial and coeternal with His Father, and the human, by which He is the child of Mary.

But these two natures are united closely and in one personality, so that, in the incarnate Lord, the humanity is as really His proper nature as is the divinity. Hence, it would be heresy to make any distinction, even in thought, between the adoration we offer to

our Lord, as man, and that we owe to Him as God. All the errors concerning the incarnation touch this vital point. Nestorius was unwilling to call the Blessed Virgin the mother of God, because he distinguished between Christ as man and Christ as God; and so, according to his system, the Word was not truly made flesh. The Church at once condemned his statement, and declared that Mary must be confessed the mother of God,—that he who refuses to her this title cannot hold the verity of the incarnation. We well understand, therefore, that supreme worship and glory are due to the human nature which the Eternal Son took of Mary's substance, and united forever to His divinity. And to that humanity entire, and in all its parts, we are bound to offer our highest adoration, even as we prostrate ourselves before the throne of the unchangeable Trinity. The Sacred Heart, therefore, as a portion of our Lord's humanity and inseparable from His divinity, is the object of our worship. It is the peculiar office of love to distinguish the separate parts of that most blessed humanity, and to offer to each its separate tribute of gratitude. One devotion does not exclude another, but each in reality height-

ens the other ; while faith is quickened to gaze directly upon the hands which were nailed to the cross, the feet that were pierced, the eyes speaking the love of God, the ears open to the cry of our miseries, the mouth pleading for our salvation, or the heart ever beating with affection for our ruined race. Faith does not become real till thus it expends itself in acts, and love has little warmth which does not show itself in tenderness. Love never stands at a distance, and coldly calculates upon the object of its affection. And even where that object be our very God, His condescension draws us all the more, when we are permitted to love Him not only in the nature before which the seraphs veil their faces, but also in flesh and blood like our own. How little they understand divine mercy, or even human love warmed by the touch of Jesus, who have no tenderness or sympathy for their incarnate Lord ! If any portion of the sacred humanity draws us more than another, it is without doubt that Heart which, beating with the current of the most precious blood, was also the seat of that divine compassion which brought the eternal Son from heaven, to take our nature,—which led Him

then from Mary's sweet arms to the tortures of the cross. Gratitude has its own blessed office to wander by an illimitable ocean, whose tides no shores restrain; and where faith and hope are unequal to their task, love stands sure and steadfast. For who can measure the love of God, the pity that designed the mystery of Calvary, or sound the depths of sorrow which overflowed the breast of the man Christ Jesus? What is so moving as that God should take a human heart, unless it be that man should grieve and break and pierce that heart?

II. The place which this devotion has in the worship of the Church is the dictate of that love which knows no bounds in its offering to its Divine benefactor. The first need of the human heart is an object of love; and the soul cannot exist without an end. Either the tenderness which God has placed within us, as the well-spring of good, will turn back upon self, or be wasted upon an unworthy object, or it must be lifted in all its strength to God. Selfishness dries up the fountains of feeling, and destroys the nobility which still inheres in our fallen nature. Earthly passions degrade the purer sensibilities of the heart, and afford no real satis

faction, since the soul, made in the image of God, cannot rest in any thing less than the Author of its being, who draws it by the very wants which are its attraction to the only true and good.

And in no way could the great Creator have so movingly shown His desire for our affection, as in taking our flesh and blood, wherein, as man, He pleads for our love. The Divine object of love has become incarnate, and while, with a human heart, He pours out His pity and compassion upon us, He, at the same time, teaches us how to devote ourselves to Him. His Sacred Heart is the model to which we must conform ourselves in our love of God. The Church is the spouse of Jesus Christ. She lives only for Him, and only by His life. He is her fulness. Hence there can be nothing so dear to her as the Heart of her Lord, on whom he leans, and for whom she exists. She has no end but to lead her children after His footsteps, and from all human affections,—to win their hearts to Him; and so she ever places before them the Heart of her crucified Master. It is the Heart of God. It is full of a divine capacity for love, and overflows with the ten-

derness of the eternal Father. It is a broken Heart, because of man's ingratitude: it is an ever-open Heart, because the centurion's spear has opened in it the spring of water and blood. The cross is upon it, as upon the whole of the divine humanity, and all excites to love. So, when the spouse is asked, in the language of the Canticles, "What manner of one is thy Beloved of the beloved, that thou hast so adjured us?" we hear the inspired response: "My Beloved is white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands. His head is as the finest gold; His locks as branches of palm-trees, black as a raven; His eyes as doves upon brooks of waters, which are washed with milk, and sit beside the plentiful streams; His cheeks are as beds of aromatical spices, set by the perfumers; His lips are as lilies, dropping choice myrrh; His hands are turned, and as of gold, full of hyacinths; His legs as pillars of marble, that are set upon bases of gold; His form as of Libanus, excellent as the cedars; His throat is most sweet, and He is all lovely. Such is my Beloved, and He is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem."* Love, in all its varieties, and

* Canticles, v. 9-16.

in all its refinements, turns with its whole strength to the incarnate Lord, and the precious name, *Jesus*, by which alone is life or salvation, is stamped upon the faithful heart. Our attraction to Him is divine, and, once in the sphere of that influence, all human things lose their power to charm or enslave. "We love Him because He first loved us." Well has He shown how He pitied our misery, when it was not too much for Him to take our nature, and to make Himself our brother. It is not in the nobility even of our fallen humanity to be unmoved at such sacrificing love, and hence the scene of Bethlehem moves all hearts which are not utterly debased by sin. What shall we say of the mystery of the cross, where the visage of the God-man becomes inglorious, and the bright beauty of the Lord of life descends to the dust of death? He that is not moved by the agonizing Heart of Jesus, has lost the dignity of his nature, and fallen below even the inanimate creation. Yet, when the believer lifts his eyes to the riches that are contained in the "Word made flesh," how is he fastened to the feet of his Redeemer, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and grace! The intellect seeks for

truth, and here, revealed in human form, is the only True. The soul seeks for beauty, and here incarnate is the unchangeable beauty of God, which holds the throng of seraphs wrapt in admiration. The will moves of necessity towards good, and here is goodness itself visible, displayed in its most touching dress. The affections long for an object on which they may surely rest, fearless of change or disappointment, and here is the love of God beating in a human heart, and overwhelming all by its power.

Another effect of love is to produce resemblance between the loving, so that, according to the universal law, like begets like. Accord between human hearts is the fruit of affection, and discord is ever an evidence of the imperfection of love. The power of this attraction is irresistible, and here the weaker yields to the stronger, and unity of will is the result of union of hearts. So the Sacred Heart, loving us with a capacity far beyond our own, and seeking for all our sympathies, draws our frail hearts into its own recesses, and conforms them to its own image. Hidden there, the soul learns to love, and, as Moses came down from the mount, transfigured

by the sight of God, so the pulsations of the precious blood quicken into new life the once feeble and sluggish disciple. He has seen the Lord, his hands have touched the print of the nails, and his eyes have looked into the open side, and his whole being cries out, "My Lord and my God." Strange beauty springs up where all was dark and dead; great power is given to suffer; the lights of sense fade away, and faith grows strong and bright, as if some celestial vision held the eye entranced. It is the door of heaven opened to the believer. It is the Sacred Heart prolific in the desert of the world, producing its like. It is Jesus calling out to the eternal Father, "Behold Me, and the children Thou hast given Me." So ever love seeks for union, and the spouse, in the depths of tenderness, cries out, "I to my Beloved, and my Beloved to me."

From this accord of the divine with the human, there springs the most perfect sympathy. The Good Shepherd has taken the lamb, once astray, into His arms, and He holds him safe against His bosom. Can there be a doubt, or fear, or sorrow, in which that gentle Shepherd

does not sympathize? Is there a sight He does not see, or a sound He does not hear? Is not His pressure all the closer, and His touch all the more tender, when waves or storms arise, and darkness covers the earth with its pall? Who can fear to be alone in His company? And as thus He bears our every infirmity, and carries our sorrows, His own weary way draws our compassion, and the fountain of our tears is opened for Him. We bear our share of His burden, we grieve when He is grieved, we sorrow when He is in pain, we are ever with Him. If He is in the desert, we are there also; if He weeps, our tears know no restraint. If He hangs upon a cross, we are faithful sentinels at its foot. His interests are ours. The glory of His name is the motive of every action, for our hearts beat in unison with His, and our whole lives are hid with Him in God. Others may lay up their treasures on earth, and lean upon human joys, which neither endure nor satisfy. Our ears have learned the music of His voice, and His will is the rule of our life. So has the Church taught us to adore the Sacred Heart, that, from its infinite loveliness, we may gain

the grace of likeness to our Lord, and learn how, in the depth of our souls, to worship the Word made flesh.

III. The effect of a true and tender devotion to the Sacred Heart, is then more than evident. It leads us to a better knowledge of Jesus, gives us a sight of His holy interior, imprints upon our souls His likeness, and helps us to be truly His children. Like every other devotion of the Church, it leads to a deeper faith, and consecrates the soul to the supreme love of Jesus, who, in the Church, is the beginning and ending of all things, the Alpha and Omega, the author and finisher of our faith. Who, in these latter days, can resist the moving appeals of the Saviour of souls? We live in a day when love has grown cold, and worldliness has desolated the garden in which the heavenly Husbandman seeks the fruit which He has planted with so much cost. There are few souls living only for Him, and faithfully improving His graces. There are few hearts whose affections are given wholly to Him. The things of sense have darkened the eye of faith, and the attractions of creatures hide from our gaze the only true and perfect beauty. On every side is open

unbelief or blasphemy. Souls once regenerated are denying the Lord that bought them, trampling upon His precious blood, and crucifying Him afresh. Louder and louder sound the insulting cries of "Crucify Him!" "Away with Him!" while infidelity puts on a bolder face, and sits in high places. The demon of atheism builds altars to His dishonor, and shouts out against Jesus of Nazareth. The unclean spirit seizes hold of the bodies and souls of men, and leads them down in swelling multitudes to the chambers of eternal death. Nation rises against nation, and the people imagine a vain thing against the Lord, and against His anointed. Armies rise against the unconquerable throne of Peter, and the rock the Most High has made immovable. There are signs in heaven and on earth, distress and perplexity on land and sea. But the deepest wounds in the heart of Jesus are ever from the house of His friends. It is not an open enemy that does Him this great dishonor. His own children turn against Him, and the coldness and ingratitude of hearts whom He has visited with peculiar mercy, renew the sad scene of Gethsemane. The dear sacrament wherein He abides a captive for our

love, and by which He especially calls for our tenderness, is the source of His greatest injuries, as around His lowly, patient throne, are crowding neglect, irreverence, or even profanation. Oh, how loudly He calls to us for our sympathy! "All ye that pass by, look and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." "Come to My relief, all ye that love Me, and let your tears flow for Me, and let your hearts share My heavy burden. The cup of man's ingratitude is My chalice, and I must drink it; yet, day after day, the justice of the eternal Father yearneth to interpose, and is only stayed by My blood. Come in penance and prayer to the embrace of My cross, and while the uplifted hand of vengeance may be restrained, My aching Heart shall draw from your sympathy a sweet consolation." Shall not human love, inspired by the Holy Ghost, awake to the yearning of infinite love, and from every earthly bond be made free, that it may ascend in all its power to the bosom of the Redeemer? Then, allied to Him, it shall go on in His blessed work of redemption, purifying souls from the dross of sin, and kindling even in human tabernacles the fire that burned in the sacred

Heart of Jesus—the consuming fire of God. Then, as the days of our pilgrimage pass away the soul shall draw nearer and nearer to heaven. The eye shall no longer see the things of sense, the ear shall no longer hear the sounds of earth, the senses shall only apprehend Him, whom truly to know is life everlasting. O merciful Heart of Jesus, accept our tears, and hearken to our offering. Amid the deceiving shadows of the world, we turn to Thee, and in the cleft of the rock smitten for our salvation, we hide our whole being. There patiently cleanse and strengthen that which out of Thee is nothing worth; there, in Thy bosom, is our safe shelter in the fury of every storm; there, the accusing angel shall plead in vain; there we shall repose, till one day we wake up to see Thy face, and rejoice with the ecstasy that knows no end, for Thy embrace is for all eternity. “His left hand is under my head, and His right hand shall embrace me.”

SERMON XXXI.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD.

“And after six days Jesus taketh unto Him Peter and James and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: and He was transfigured before them. And His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow.”—S. MATTHEW, xvii. 1, 2.

THE transfiguration of our Lord was one of the most sublime and wonderful manifestations of His person which are recorded in the gospels. We do not know when his promise to Nathanael was fulfilled. That apostle saw heaven opened, and the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. But the circumstances of this manifestation are not revealed. The baptism in Jordan was also a manifestation of Christ; but the glory was revealed to few, and the body of our Lord was only seen in its infirmity. The new birth was shown forth, and the quickening of the soul; but the splendor of the regenerate body was hidden. So again the ascension was the triumphal entry of the con-

quering Saviour into His Father's courts, but the joy of angels was not seen ; and when the disciples looked after Him, watching the last look of His face, the last beams of His splendor, the golden cloud interposed, and the excellent glory was veiled from their sight.

Yet the transfiguration was witnessed by three apostles, who were actually permitted to gaze for a moment upon the dazzling lights of heaven. In this scene are many deep mysteries for faithful hearts ; lessons for every true believer, and for the whole church of Christ. I am sure that we have not realized, even as we may, the sublimity and wonderfulness of this great manifestation of our Redeemer. Three evangelists have recorded it, and preface it by the remarkable words of our Lord, " Amen I say unto you, there be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of **Man** coming in His kingdom." It is therefore a revelation of the kingly power and dignity of Christ, showing to these apostles the true estate of their master, and the dominion over all of Him whom men scoffed at and derided. It was the eighth day after this saying when Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them to the top of an ex-

ceeding high mountain. These three were to witness the agony of Christ in the garden, and now they must see His great glory. These three were chosen to see the deepest woe and highest glory of Jesus. He brought them thus to the top of Tabor, afar from the sight of men, to be alone with God. And thus ever does He lead chosen souls away from sense and the love of earthly things, that they may look to Him, and in silence listen to His inward revelations. There can be no knowledge of the Lord and His all-consoling grace, no tasting of the preciousness of Christ, unless we cease to love the world and the things that are therein. We must look away from things seen, and lay up our treasure in heaven, if we would that God should visit us, and make known to us the richness of communion with Him. They who would mount up to God must, in heart and mind, forsake the world, and learn to despise its empty honors and sinful pleasures.

When our Lord and his three apostles had reached the summit of this mountain, "He was transfigured before them, and His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow." His sacred body was appearing, as it

became Him who for us was made lower than the angels, to be crowned as man with glory and honor. Nor was He alone. He who so glorified our humanity, glorifies others in Himself. Moses and Elias were sharers in His light—Moses whom God had buried, and Elias, translated to paradise without seeing corruption. Both were summoned to wait upon their incarnate Lord. “They were talking with Jesus, and spake of His decease, which he should accomplish in Jerusalem.”* The law and the prophets point unto Christ and the great sacrifice of the Lamb of God. And to Him, the mediator of the new covenant, is the praise of saints offered up, the adoration of patriarchs and prophets and the true Israel.

The power and blessing of this revelation of the Lord Jesus were so great upon the apostles, that Peter even answers unto Jesus: “Master, it is good for us to be here. If Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.” But he knew not what he said. After the display of this kingly majesty of Jesus, he did not see the way of the cross, and the spiritual power through

* S. Luke, ix. 31.

it by which his master was to reign. The glory which he saw then was to be hereafter ; and even greater joy should come, when, all his toils and pains being past, he should be at rest on the everlasting mountain of God, in that city where the Lord God almighty is the temple and The Lamb is the perpetual light. But from that glory both master and servant must go down to suffering and humiliation—the master, to the ignominy of Calvary ; the servant, to many sorrows and a baptism of blood.

Before Peter's words were finished, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and the apostles trembled as they passed under the cloud. That cloud was the symbol of God's presence, and from that cloud the voice of the Father was heard, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye Him." When the disciples heard it, they were prostrated with fear, and fell upon their faces to the earth. They had been awfully near to the Lord of hosts, and they knew not how dreadful was the place until the breath within them was chilled and they became as dead. None can see God, none can draw nigh to His awful majesty, who are not in Christ, borne up by the power of his life-giving

flesh ; and they were revived by His touch, and awoke in His strength. They lifted up their eyes, and they were alone with Jesus ; and He was, as before, the man of sorrows, the meek and lowly Nazarene.

Such, my brethren, is a simple account of the transfiguration ; and when the wonderful scene was past, it was kept secret till after the resurrection from the dead. S. Peter thus refers to it in his epistle : “ We have not followed cunningly-devised fables when we made known unto you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice from the excellent glory, “ This is My Beloved Son, in whom I have pleased Myself ; hear ye Him. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.*

S. John also saw this glory again when, on the isle of Patmos, the Lord was revealed to him. Once again he saw the Son of Man clothed in garments of light. “ His head and His hairs were white as white wool and as

* 2 E. S. Peter, i. 2-18.

snow, and His eyes were as a flame of fire, and His face was as the sun shining in his power.”* Again he fell at His feet as dead, and again was revived by the touch of Christ. “He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, ‘fear not.’”

We consider, therefore, this scene as the manifestation of our Lord in the glory which He eternally wears in the kingdom of His father. His power was shown to men, and three mortals were permitted to look upon the light with which He is eternally clothed, and which He shall reflect upon His chosen. From the hour of His incarnation His majesty was not visibly seen. He was as a man among men. He had never shown the splendor of His manhood united to his divine person. Here the power and presence of the incarnate Word are displayed, and the son of man is seen in the regal dignity of His kingdom.

And as here is seen the greatness of our divine redeemer, so in Him is seen the beauty of His church, which is all glorious within, whose clothing is of the finest gold. We who are united to Him are partakers of this glory, which shall be perfectly revealed in us, as even now it

* Apocalypse, i. 14, 15.

is communicated to us, because we abide in Him and He abides in us. In the transfigured Lord we see His transfigured church wholly illumined by His presence, without spot or any blemish, filled by Him who is her fulness, filling all in all. The law and the prophets have no such blessedness. They cannot be perfected without us. They, too, must come to the temple of the Lamb and be joined with us in Christ, who bindeth together in Himself the things in earth and the things in heaven. Moses and Elias can only shine in the light of Emmanuel.

And where we see the glory of the church, there we know the true estate of every faithful soul who, joined unto his Lord, is in all things conformed unto His likeness. What he is in His ever-living and life-giving manhood, that we shall be, since we are to see Him face to face, and when He shall appear we shall be like Him. The christian then, in his transfigured Lord, may even see himself, changed into the same image and clad in the same garments of glory, borne above the chains of earth and sense to the very bosom of the eternal Father. Our bodies, which now have in them the seeds

of death and concupiscence festering in our members, which must bow down to the dust and see corruption, even they shall partake of this power of Christ and be transfigured after the pattern of His risen humanity. For even now they feel the might of sacramental grace and the touch of His quickening body. For Jesus does more than lay His hand upon us. He giveth us His flesh to eat, and, in his own gracious words, he who eateth Him liveth by Him, liveth for evermore. Our flesh is quickened by the flesh of Christ, and shall rise from death by His life, who shall change the body of our low estate that it may be made like unto His own glorious body, according to the operation whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself. The glorified body shall be united to the purified soul, and the risen saints shall be illumined with that very splendor which shone on Tabor. Blessed consummation of all our hopes; blessed end of all our struggles; blessed crowning of God's own gifts in us; blessed fulness of Him whom God filleth! Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us, but unto Thy name give the praise, for Thy loving mercy and for Thy truth's sake.

But, dear brethren, are not such words too high for us? Doth it not seem that, in following our Lord up to the holy mount, we have even forgotten ourselves and the wretchedness of our sins? Can we, who are unclean, who have been clothed with filthy rags, can we aspire to that garment whiter than snow, brighter than light,—we whose mouths should be in the dust, who often cannot so much as look up to heaven,—can our faces shine as the sun in his power? Yes, beloved, even such is the hope, both sure and steadfast, of those who, plunged in the deep of their own misery, have found a refuge in that vaster deep of God's mercy. Even such shall be the reward of those who here subdue and cast out self—who, but darkness in themselves, have become light in the Lord. But if at last we are to rest upon the mountain's top and be glorified in Christ, we must even now be led by Him away from the world, and be following up the steep ascent in His footsteps. Day by day we must be climbing after Him, and day by day be leaving farther behind us the things of sense, as every hour we draw nearer to that unspeakable felicity. Yet who that grovels now in the toys of

earth, and finds it hard to look away from earthly delights; who that is not honest with God; who that deceiveth himself, can hope for any portion in the triumph of Christ? Men may not gain a corruptible crown without labor and unwearied vigilance and unshrinking discipline. Shall the Judge of all require less, or give the golden crowns to those who wearied themselves in the vanities of time, but never vigorously set themselves to gain salvation? Who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord, or rise up in his tabernacles? Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart, that speaketh truth, and hath done no ill to his neighbor. Behold our model as on the cross, so on the height of Tabor. He was manifested to impart to us His life, His purity, His glory. All things are possible to the believer. Ye who are in earnest in the battle with sin, look up and lift up your hearts, for your victory is at hand. Soon the voice of the bridegroom shall be heard, and when He shall once more appear, we shall appear with Him in glory.

SERMON XXXII.

THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.

S. LUKE, ii. 22—32.

For the Feast of the Purification.

THE simple story which has just been read declares the reason of our festivity to-day, the fulfilment of two most important prophecies, and many practical lessons for our spiritual improvement. Forty days after the birth of our Lord, the holy Virgin came to the temple, according to the provision of the law, to present her child unto God, and to offer the accustomed gifts of the mother for her purification. By the divine command, under the Jewish system, the first-born male child was dedicated to God. To save the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, He had slain all the first-born males of their oppressors; and in remembrance of this deliverance, He called them to offer forever unto

Him the first-fruits of their bodies, of their flocks, and of the earth. And although in place of the first-born He had taken the whole tribe of Levi, yet he thus perpetually declared His absolute sovereignty. This offering was made when the mother came, after forty days, to make both a burnt-offering and a sin-offering. She was to bring to the door of the tabernacle of the testimony a lamb of a year old for a holocaust, and a young pigeon or a turtle for sin. But if she were too poor to bring a lamb, she was to take two turtles or two young pigeons, one for a holocaust and another for sin. The Blessed Virgin being of the poor, though bringing the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world, had availed herself of this provision; and coming with her offering, she presented her child unto God, who was pleased in this way to fulfil the promised joy of Simeon, and to open the eyes of St. Anna to see the Redeemer of Israel and the long-expected fulfilment of prophecy. Holy Simeon saw with his aged eyes the Saviour of men, and with his feeble arms embraced the incarnate Lord, and, fully satisfied, desired only to die in the peace of His presence. St. Anna “at the same hour

coming in, confessed to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all that looked for the redemption of Israel." But how different, beloved, was this offering from the ordinary ones! how different this purification from that which the law had contemplated! The offering was God's own eternal Son, incarnate for our salvation, who had come to fulfil the will of His Father. The Mother was the fairest of God's creation, conceived without sin, and she now appeareth as one of those who had felt the primeval curse, when, by a birth without pain, she had brought forth her God. She cometh still with her infant child, "to fulfil all justice, moved by the humility of her divine Son, and disdaining not to seem as other women, since he chose to appear as other children. Well may we, who were born in sin, wonder at such humility, which was only one of the mysterious humiliations of Him who was made a curse for us. Among the poor, unthought-of in the crowd, cometh in the Queen of Heaven, and offereth in His own temple the Redeemer of men—Him of whom David had said, "The Lord hath said unto my Lord, sit Thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies Thy footstool."

Yet a reason for this humiliation may be found in the two prophecies to which I have alluded, and which had a fulfilment in this wonderful scene. After the Jews had returned from the Babylonian captivity, the prophet Aggeus was sent to speed on the rebuilding of the temple, when the people, sorely oppressed on every side, were tempted to despair. Amid all their sorrows, the house of God was slowly struggling up from its ruins, and, compared with the splendor of the former temple of Solomon, seemed hardly worthy of the favor of Him against whom they had sinned. So great was the contrast that it added to their affliction, and they almost lost the heart to finish the work which they had begun. But the Lord sent them by His prophets this word :* “ Who is left among you that saw this house in its first glory ; and how do you see it now ? Is it not, in comparison to that, as nothing in your eyes ? Yet now take courage, for thus saith the Lord of hosts : Yet one little while, and I will move the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will move all nations : and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house

* Aggeus, ii. 4-10.

with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. Great shall be the glory of this last house, more than of the first, saith the Lord of hosts, and in this place will I give peace." We shall understand this promise, and its application to this festival, if we look back to the history of the Jewish church. In *what* did the true glory of the first temple consist? Not in its costly magnificence of cedar and gold, nor in its unequalled outward splendor. It was the place of God's presence, the abode of the Schekinah or symbol of His glory, which alway rested upon the ark between the cherubims. From the time God chose them for His peculiar people that symbol of His presence had been ever with them. It was the cloud and pillar of fire which led them in their wanderings. It was the glory that lighted up the burning mountain of Sinai, and that abode in the tabernacle when it was finished after the pattern showed to Moses in the mount. Thence it passed with the ark to the tabernacle of David, and from thence to the temple of Solomon. For you will remember, beloved, how, when "the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord, into its place,

into the oracle of the temple, into the Holy of Holies, under the wings of the cherubim," "that a cloud filled the house of the Lord, and the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord."* The ark was the symbol of the presence of Jehovah, and a bright glory alway covered it; for the ruler of Israel and the leader of Joseph did sit upon the cherubim,† and the light which rested upon that mercy-seat was the same consuming fire which burnt upon Sinai and shone to Moses in the bush. Yet, when the Jews were carried captive unto Babylon, the temple was destroyed and the ark was lost, and the glory of God had left them. In the second temple, rebuilt in the time of Aggeus the prophet, there was no ark and no symbol of God's presence. The house, which outwardly seemed so unworthy in their eyes, was inwardly bereft of the light of the Lord and the sacred sign of His favor. Still, as we have seen, prophecy declared that it should far exceed in glory the former temple, which they remembered with so much pain at what they had lost. And now we find the fulfilment

* 3 Kings, viii. 6—11.

† Psalm lxxix.

of this prophecy, when, as on this day, Almighty God incarnate came to His temple, and in substance of our flesh was presented before His own altar. Thus did the "desire of all nations" come to give peace. Thus did the latter house see a greater glory than the former had known. For the former temple only typified the glory which the latter actually saw. The ark was the symbol of the incarnate Lord, setting forth the mystery of "God manifest in the flesh." It was not the incarnate Lord Himself. The fiery cloud was the symbol of God's presence; it was not God Himself. But here God Himself was truly seen; the Word, made flesh, was truly looked upon and handled: and the true ark, and true Schekinah, was in His temple, the child Jesus—"wonderful, counsellor, God the mighty, the father of the world to come, the prince of peace." Here was seen the actual glory of every Christian altar, the saving Host before whom, in His wonderful condescension, bow down the angels of heaven and all the ransomed children of men. For here is present the same Lord, not in symbol, not in figure, but in very truth, even as He is in heaven, only that He veils His unutterable glory, lest it should

overwhelm and consume those whom He wishes to feed and strengthen for the cloudless vision of God. Observe, then, beloved, the completion of prophecy in the presentation of the child Jesus, and its connection also with the great sacrament of His love, which is the Schekinah of the Christian church.

The second prophecy to which I referred is that of Malachias, which is read in the place of the epistle in the Mass of to-day : “ And presently the Lord whom you seek, and the Angel of the Testament whom you desire, shall come to His temple.” “ Behold he cometh, saith the Lord of hosts.”* Jesus came to His own house, to purify His own people, to purge the sins of Levi, and in place of them to set up His own priesthood, “ who should be made, not according to the law of a carnal commandment, but according to the power of an indissoluble life.”† His coming was a sword to sever the true from the vile, and a fire to burn up the ungodly hypocrisy of those who sought themselves and not the service of God. His coming was the cutting down of the pride of fallen Israel, and the gathering of the true Israelites in Himself, who

* Malachias, iii. 1.

† E. Heb., vii. 16.

bindeth together both Jew and Gentile. His coming was the awful visitation of God upon those who, profane in their wickedness, had filled up the measure of their iniquity. Therefore, adds the prophet: "Who shall be able to think of the day of His coming, and who shall stand to see Him? for He is like a refining fire, and like the fuller's herb." And though He came as a little child, yet He came with the rod of power in His hands, and His seeming weakness was almighty strength. He was indeed the desire of all nations, the Angel of the Testament that they had looked for; and though they received Him not, yet the course of His judgment went on, and "to the faithful He gave power to be made sons of God," while the stubborn were cast off forever. So said the holy Simeon, "Behold this child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted." Many refused to see the light, and perished. Many were subdued unto His kingdom, and rose unto newness of life, and "the sons of Levi were refined as gold to offer unto the Lord sacrifices in justice."

These reflections may lead us to the great

lesson of this holy day. The Son of God having taken our human nature into union with His divine person, and so being truly man, is presented unto God. The Son of Mary is God's own eternal Son, in whom He is ever well pleased ; and we can only be presented to the Father *in Him*, as we are actual lively members of His body. And that very humanity must be *in us*, our life, and the life of all who by it are made one with God. We must be presented to the Father in Him who was for us, as on this day, offered in the temple. We can enter into the Holies only by "the new and living way" of the flesh of Jesus. Therefore, when we see Jesus presented unto God in His temple, we may see ourselves consecrated in Him, and in the Lamb, the heavenly temple, an acceptable offering unto the triune God. He who glorified the latter house is Himself wholly the glory of His church, which, being one with Him, is in Him a sacrifice forever unto God, whose incense forever ascends unto the throne. So look we forward, through the clouds which sin has drawn around us, to a perfect cleansing from our earthly stains. From earth look we up to God, and in Christ expect an entrance where there is

neither temptation nor sin nor fear. Yet, beloved, clean must be our hands and pure our hearts. Our eyes must be steadfastly fixed upon things unseen, continually aspiring to that glory which God hath revealed. No earthly life shall lead us there. Naught can bring us there but the strait and toilsome path of obedience, which here subdues the flesh, with its affections and lusts. By living for the world we may gain a portion *here*; but O! to fit ourselves for heaven, we must labor for the life to come, and in all learn to seek only God. He who is the true Schekinah is ever with us in the blessed sacrament of His love, wherein He manifests Himself and gives us His flesh to eat. And He who offers us, in whom we are offered, is Himself offered by us; and worms of the dust are accepted through Him, by Him, and in Him. O! who can resist such love? Who shall not bow down to consecrate His life unto God? Shall not "sin in its inmost germ be plucked from the will, and the deepest roots of evil be torn away," in the presence of Him the spotless victim for our sins? Shall not repentance be quickened, humility be deepened, faith grow strong, and love find no rest save in Him in

whose pierced heart there is a sure abiding place forever ?

Yet who could seek the Redeemer to-day, and not seek Him through His Blessed Mother? She beareth in her arms the Lord of life ; therefore is she the ever-open gate of heaven. She hath crushed the head of the serpent and brought forth the Sun of Justice ; therefore is she the refuge of sinners.

O ! seek her prevailing intercession, ye who would save your souls and grow in the favor of God. Place yourselves anew under her protection to-day, and by pureness of life, and the daily oblation of your whole being, seek to be presented by her immaculate hands unto her divine Son. The prayers of Mary shall be as a wall of fire by day and a shield by night, and under her care you may pass safely through the darkness of this world to the perfect light and peace of God.

SERMON XXXIII.

THE HEAVENLY MANSIONS.

“In My Father’s house there are many mansions.”—S. JOHN, xiv. 2.

The Feast of Saints Philip and James.

THE two apostles whom we commemorate to-day were, under widely different circumstances, confessors of Christ and witnesses of His resurrection. S. Philip was of Bethsaida in Galilee, and was chosen by our Saviour to follow Him, the day after the call of S. Peter and S. Andrew. He left all his worldly goods, houses and lands, and cast in his lot with the poor and despised Nazarene. He even went not back to bury the dead, but left this work of mercy for the higher functions of his apostleship. Through his agency Nathanael, who has been supposed to be S. Bartholomew, was brought to the true knowledge of Christ. Besides what is

said of him in the gospels, it is known that after our Lord's ascension he preached the faith in Phrygia, where he lived to an advanced age, surviving all his fellow-apostles except S. John. He was buried at Hierapolis; and as in life God wrought great miracles by his hand, so in death He was pleased, by like displays of power, to make known the honor and glory of this saint.

Saint James—called “the less,” to distinguish him from James the son of Zebedee—was the son of Alpheus and Mary the sister of the Blessed Virgin. He was therefore the cousin of our Lord, and was called, in the language of the Jews, His brother. With his brother Jude, he was called to the apostleship in the second year of our Lord's ministry.

He was a Nazarite, consecrated unto God from his youth, and always lived a virgin. His life was, moreover, one of great austerity, and he, as it were, lived upon his knees, or prostrate upon his face, in continual prayer, so that the skin of his knees and forehead had become hard through his devotion.

It is said that our Lord, before his ascension, recommended His church of Jerusalem to S.

James, in consequence of which he became bishop of that city. On account of his eminent sanctity, even the Jews gave him the title of the "just man," and were wont to vie with each other in reverence to his person. His epistle, called catholic, was written about the year 60, and was addressed to all the converted Jews dispersed throughout the world. In this epistle he prepares his brethren for the trying of their faith in the persecutions which were at hand.

At last he was called before the Sanhedrim by Annanus, the son of Annas (before whom our Blessed Lord was judged), and by this council was condemned to be stoned. Thence he was carried up to the battlements of the temple, where, with more than his wonted boldness, he confessed Christ, and declared, in the presence of the multitude who were crowding to the pass-over, that Jesus was seated at the right hand of God, and would come in the clouds of heaven to judge the world. At this the Scribes and Pharisees were so enraged that they threw him headlong to the ground, where the rabble received him with a shower of stones. The holy man, though bruised with his fall, had strength enough to get upon his knees and to pray for

his murderers; and in this position he was struck upon the head by a fuller's club, and so yielded up his spirit unto God. Thus to his other rewards he added the crown of a martyr, and went up to be as a welcome brother in the presence of his Redeemer and God.

So did two apostles, in their different lots, glorify their master and attain their thrones in His blissful presence, in that house of His Father where there are many mansions. And all who, like them, have fought the good fight of faith, have followed them as they followed Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life, the head of His redeemed, the king of saints, the sun of righteousness, who is glorified in the lesser light of those whom His presence fills. For though Christ is one and the body is one, yet there are many members, with different offices and differing gifts. Two apostles leave the mountain of our Lord's ascension, and are parted by the call of God. They fulfil their work in the different spheres which God had assigned them, and by different paths they attain the holy city, and meet again in the presence of God. And by a singular providence they are brought together in the yearly celebrations of the church, because,

perhaps, they are separate witnesses of Jesus and the resurrection.

So is it, my brethren, with all who follow in their steps. We are alone, and yet not alone. Not alone, because Christ is in us, and saints and angels are one with us; and yet alone, as to each single soul God sends his own especial dispensations, whether of trials or of joy, and leads each believer, according to his own peculiar need, to seek the divine fulness. Each one has his own duties, the lot in which he is cast to glorify God, the part he must act in saving his own soul and **the** souls of his fellow-men. And it matters not what that lot may be: therein must he subdue himself, learn to give up his own will, and resign all his hopes and fears to Him who knoweth all things. We are apt to look even at divine things with worldly eyes, measuring even the glories of saints as men judge of the heights of earthly ambition. But in that heaven where there are many mansions, where one star differeth from another star in glory, the will of God is the supreme rule, obedience is the universal law. And so is it here with all who are training for that blissful place. There is one desire, to do God's will;

one aim, to glorify Him; one end, God Himself. There can be no choice of station or of place; for where He has placed us, there must we cheerfully and patiently act out His will, desiring above all things to have no will of our own, no desire which does not find its end in Him.

And as the glory of all in whom Jesus dwells is only the glory of our incarnate God, so the different heights of saints are only a mutual joy, since in all God is seen and God is magnified. And ere we reach those heavenly mansions every stain of sin is purged away, and all the orders of the holy, and all the ranks of angels, are filled with the infinite purity.

Learn, then, my brethren, to seek an abode among the blessed by faithful diligence in the station in which God's providence has placed you. Seek not great things, nor try to change that mode of life which, for your eternal good, God has ordained. Act well your part, with love to God and love to man, as a member of the crucified, as one whom the blood of God has redeemed and cleansed. But O! keep a heart burning with love to Jesus, an ear quick to hear His whispers, and a determined will to

obey. Frustrate not His grace nor any of His plans with your souls. Defer not to give yourself wholly to Him, and, as He may bid you, turn your eyes from all things earthly, and fix them only upon Him. Let him, as he willeth, take up your affections and give your wayward heart an infinite rest.

He is the way. Apostles walk only in His steps, sustained by His strength, animated by His example. He has opened the door in heaven, and made plain the new and living way of His flesh. And the humblest christian shall find no pathway to peace but His blood-stained footsteps, that way of union with Christ wherein man finds acceptance in the Beloved. It needs but a good and faithful heart to give up self for God, and to walk in the way of the crucified, to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts. In all, then, seek conformity with Christ, that in this pilgrimage you may walk even as He walked.

He is the truth. He, the incarnate Word, revealeth God unto men, brings heaven upon earth, and sends into our darkness His certain light. Here submit your reason to Him who maketh known His way of salvation only in

and through His church. Firmly believe in Him and all He has thus revealed. He can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Seek no other way of knowing Him, but bow down your whole soul to the obedience of that faith which His church delivers, and rest upon His promise, who, being the truth, ever abides in her, to make known His saving power, to embrace in His arms the sick and needy children of men.

He is the life. Our nature He has taken into union with His Godhead, that we may partake His divine nature and live in God. "As He liveth by the Father, so do we live by Him." He hath united both angels and His redeemed in Himself, making of many, one, and pervading all with His life. As the sun shineth in his thousand rays, so Christ liveth in His saints, in each and in all both life and light. He quickens their souls and raises their bodies, and will sustain their immortality by His own eternity.

Follow, then, in His steps, to the many mansions He went before to prepare. And if, when you yield up your departing spirit, you would find at once a home in His presence, O! strive here with all your might to be "pure even as

He is pure." Wash out every stain of sin. Weep for every past transgression. Seek the seal of His pardon. In all things cast out self, and be it your daily prayer, that whatever else He may deny you here, He would at least purge and cleanse you, to be ready at His coming.

SERMON XXXIV.

FIDELITY OR TREASON.

“For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let their habitation become desolate, and let there be none to dwell therein. And his bishopric let another take.”—ACTS, i. 20.

For the Feast of S. Matthias.

THIS day brings with it sadness as well as joy. We not only glory in the fidelity of an apostle and martyr, but we are reminded of the treason and awful end of the apostate who denied his Lord, lost his crown in heaven, and fell headlong to his own place in the lowest abyss of hell. The betrayal of the Lord Jesus, that unfaithful kiss, and all the scenes of sorrow that followed, rise up before our memories when we see another called to fill the vacant throne and repair the injuries of the traitor. But it was a part of the woe of Jesus that one who ate bread with Him should conspire with His enemies against Him; that in His immaculate presence

there should be one possessed with a devil; that a son of perdition should be among His chosen twelve. Of the few whom he honored with especial love and with every token of affection, one was to betray Him. Thus were the prophecies fulfilled, when deep and dark and damning treachery pursued the all-holy Redeemer, and Judas Iscariot sold his God for gold.

But before the presence of the Father are twelve thrones which shine in glory; and though Satan carry captive even an apostle, he cannot diminish the sacred number of the elect ones nor spoil the trophies of the mediatorial kingdom. The Scripture had written, "Let his habitation be desolate, and his bishopric let another take;" and by the inspired voice of Peter the vacant seat is filled, and one who had long been with Jesus is promoted to the work of an apostle. Thus S. Matthias takes the place of the traitor, and through labors, sufferings, tears, and the baptism of blood, goes up to reign in the glory from which Judas fell. So among His redeemed the king of saints is glorified, and the sad falls of some make way for the more fervent devotion and greater reward of others.

This day we celebrate the crowning of one

who succeeded to the lost portion of Judas, and has left us the memory of exalted devotion in the place of treason and apostacy.

St. Matthias was one of the seventy disciples, and was a constant follower of our Lord from the day of His baptism in Jordan. Chosen to be an apostle, he received the Holy Ghost with the rest on the day of Pentecost, and soon after began his labors. The faith was planted by him in Cappadocia and on the coasts of the Caspian Sea, and he was martyred in Colchis. S. Clement tells us that he was remarkable for inculcating the necessity of the mortification of the flesh with regard to all its sensual and irregular desires, a lesson which he had received from Christ Himself, and which he practised assiduously on his own body. No doubt he ever felt how he stood in the place of one who fell by transgression; and with S. Paul he desired to beat under his body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, after he had been so exalted, he might be a castaway. So that the fall of Judas and *his* great devotion unto Christ teach one and the same lesson to all Christians, the danger of losing eternal life, and the need of earnestly striving for the rewards laid up for

the righteous. And as austerity was the chief characteristic of Saint Matthias, our reflections may well harmonize with this holy season, in which we are called to subdue the flesh and chastise our members which have been the instruments of sin.

Each Christian soul is placed in a conflict which must end in victory or defeat—victory through the grace of Christ, or defeat through the love of sin. And before us is held up on this day the shameful fall of our Lord's betrayer and the bright glory of Matthias, that, seeing the end of both, we may take to our hearts the warning which God has given us, and learn in time to prepare for eternity.

Whither are our present ways tending? Do they lead to life or death? Will we follow the path of obedience to know the Lord, with full purpose to do all His will? Is it our highest aim to be like our Lord, and are we willing to tread in His steps, even though we share His cross?

We Christians are in danger of falling from the grace of Christ, and we must either grow daily in the knowledge of God or draw back unto the peril of our souls. Jesus is day by day

betrayed by His servants, day by day wounded in the house of His friends, and day by day crucified afresh.

There has been many a Judas among our Lord's disciples, even among his priests; and many who cry Lord, Lord, have in their inmost hearts resolved to betray Him, when Satan, the world, or the flesh shall bring enough of reward.

Judas had long been with our Lord; had heard His holy words; had looked upon His blessed face; had seen His sorrows, reproach, and poverty; and had been witness of His mighty miracles. But his heart was never given up to Him, and he loved himself better than his Lord. In following the despised Jesus of Nazareth he had his own ends to serve. The other disciples really loved their master; and though, in His deepest woe, when the waves and storms passed over Him, they were cast down by fear, yet they wept over their inconstancy, and their true love awoke again in fresh and irresistible strength. Even S. Peter, whose faithful confession of His incarnation had merited the keys of the kingdom of heaven, even *he* denied Him for a moment; but in deep repent-

ance he arose from that conflict with Satan, to hold forever that life-giving truth, forever to strengthen his brethren. Love quickened the rest; but love did not warm the cold heart of Judas, who was bent on sordid gain, who sacrificed every thing to his own self-love. But what a fearful course did the traitor run in the very eyes of his Almighty Maker and Judge! How many words of grace were wasted upon his soul! how many gracious inspirations were resisted! What unspeakable privileges did he lose! How often did Jesus in love admonish him, and appear to his heart with that winning kindness by which He distinguished him, though He knew perfectly every thought of his mind! Our all-gracious God looked through every purpose of His betrayer, knew what was in him, saw clearly every step of his dark iniquity; and yet He gave him the tender monitions of love, held before him the promises of glory in the world above, and often gave him warnings of the awful end to which he was hastening. All our Lord's discourses had a fearful lesson for him, and those few last terrible words were meant to open his eyes, and even then to give him the chance of repentance. "Have not I chosen

you twelve, and one of you is a devil!" "Ye are clean, but not all." "Jesus was troubled in spirit, and testified, saying, Verily I say unto you, one of you shall betray Me. He it is to whom I shall give bread when I have dipped it. And when He had dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly." But alas! mercies, promises of reward, terrible warnings, were of no avail. He was a thief, Satan had entered into him, and thirty pieces of silver were enough to pay for betraying the innocent blood. "The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him, but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed! good were it for him if he had never been born."

My brethren, Judas is but the type of those who pierce anew the body of their Lord, who quench the spirit, who count the blood wherewith they have been sanctified a common thing, who trample under foot the Son of God. And each traitor against his Lord goes on from step to step in the very course of Judas, sinning in the very presence of Christ, refusing the calls of God, and neglecting the manifold means of grace which He has provided for our spiritual

wants. This treason begins in putting self before the will of God, and it goes on till God's sacred rule within us is wholly cast down, and self-love reigns, hardening our ears against the words of truth, shutting our eyes against the revelations of God, and fettering our hands and feet in the ways and habits of sin. All that we do is done for some selfish end. We promise unto God and do not perform. When self-denial, reproach, persecution come, we shrink from the trial. It is a burden to pray and a fretting exercise to fast. We give alms grudgingly; and all the while we seem outwardly to follow on after Christ, there is a secret will within us which is not bowed down to do what God shall bid us or to suffer what He shall demand. Let us take heed, and now go down to the root of the matter, and from our hearts pluck out the evil plants which Satan has sown there. We must love God supremely. Yes, and serve Him supremely; and not self, or fame, or wealth, or friends, or ease, or any thing this world can offer. Let us emulate the bright glory of Matthias, whom we see come forth, as on this day, to take the traitor's place. He had seen with awe and fear the treachery of Judas,

and had wondered at the depth of his iniquity. Now he is taken into the vacant seat, and becomes a willing sacrifice unto God ; and whatever shall betide him, he is resolved not to swerve from his first love. Alone, severed from every earthly tie, in the wilds of the savage tribes, he goes preaching Christ ; and faithfulness, even unto death, fills the place of treason and apostacy. Moreover, he has left a lesson which Jesus Himself taught him, the lesson of voluntary mortification and self-denial. He that would keep his will in union with God, let him subdue the flesh, cut off luxuries, break the power of appetite. He that would really be conformed unto Christ, let him live carefully, soberly, and strictly. Let him fear the things of sense, and turning from the false light they give, look up to his God, that in His light he may see light, that He may mould, fashion, renew him after His own image. O ! fear not to look up unto God, since Jesus sitteth on the Father's right hand ; since in His kingdom even now are gathered the first fruits unto God and the Lamb. If with purpose strong thou hast given thy heart unto Him, look steadfastly where thy treasure is ; and as thine eyes gaze

upon Him who is thy life, scales shall fall from thy vision, the things below shall lose their power to attract, and here in the body the light, the peace, the joy of heaven shall open upon thee.

Seek by prayer to commune with God ; by fasting, draw nearer to the invisible world. Learn to hate the sinful self which thou hast been, and love nothing which is not in God, which does not raise thee to Him who has bought thee with a price, who will take nothing but the whole heart and soul and mind. Be faithful to all the light God has given thee, and His glory, which shines around thee, shall grow brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

Nor must we forget that he who would escape from falling must ever be rising ; rising in all the ways of grace : ever forgetting the things behind, and reaching forth unto the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

And pray we on this day, dear brethren, for the holy church and all her pastors and teachers. The latter days may be close at hand ; for who is antichrist but he that denieth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh ? What standeth sure but the foundation of God ? Who have

gone out from us but those who were not of us? Pray for the faithful, that they may persevere in grace; but O! pray earnestly for the priesthood, that they may with zeal, fidelity, and holiness discharge the duties of their high calling, nor ever, for the love of sin or the fear of the world, betray the master who has distinguished them with His love, nor sacrifice His interests for any thing that time can give.

SERMON XXXV.

THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON.

“And He came near and touched the bier. And they that carried it stood still. And He said, Young man, I say unto thee, arise.”—S. LUKE, vii. 14.

For the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

THE gospel for this day records a wonderful miracle. As Jesus approaches the city of Naim, he meets a funeral-train coming out of the gate. A widow was going to the grave with the body of her only son, and a great multitude of the city was with her. He who wipeth tears from all faces is moved with compassion, and gives an unexpected comfort to the mourner in this hour, when all hope had failed. He came and touched the bier, and they that carried it, by an act of faith, stood still. The King, to whom all things live, called back the soul; the dead heard His voice, and awoke in life and perfect health.

“He that was dead sat up and began to speak. And He gave him to his mother.”

We, my brethren, can have little knowledge of the effect of this great miracle. Wrought publicly at the gate of the city, amid the crowd that followed in the funeral procession, it was a fearful scene, which oppressed as well as revived them all. Death is well called the king of terrors. But almost as fearful as death is the resurrection from the dead. They could not resist the power of Him who had called the spirit from the place of the departed, thus showing the truth that He was Lord of life and death. “Fear came on all, and they glorified God, saying that a great prophet is risen up among us, and that God hath visited His people.”

So the first lesson we are to learn to-day, as these things are brought before us, concerns the power and office of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Resurrection and the Life. In Him is life. He must *touch* the bier, and His quickening voice must speak into the ears of the dead. Thus His voice, when on earth, was powerful over disease and death; and thus His voice shall awake all the dead, when the hour cometh

that all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and come forth to their last account.

And as His voice awakens, so His touch giveth life. Under the law, the touch communicated uncleanness, and required the legal cleansings. The leper's touch polluted, and any contact with the unclean needed purification. So here the touch of the Son of God communicates holiness and life. His touch both cured the malady of sin and healed bodily disease. The penitent Magdalene was cleansed by the touch of His sacred feet; and all who were diseased must be touched by Him, who, being Life, communicates life. All bodily diseases are but types of the plague of sin, as they are the consequences and punishments of sin; and so, in our Lord's life, His miraculous cures but show forth His wonder-working power against sin. Here, in the words of S. Chrysostom, "Life, meeting death, stopped the bier." So the Son of God not only showed that He was the "Resurrection and the Life," but also showed how He communicates life, by His own touch, by contact and union with Himself. I need hardly enlarge, dear brethren, to tell you

how true it is that the touch of Jesus giveth *us* life. Surely I need not remind you how, in holy baptism, He touches us, taking us into Himself, making us really and indeed His members; or how, in the divine Eucharist, He gives Himself to us to be our food, to be within us the life of our souls and bodies. All the sacraments are but so many ways in which Jesus touches us, to give life, to confirm, to forgive, to save. Truly it is only by the touch of the incarnate Son of God that we live, as sinners forgiven and restored, vessels of His grace, children of the resurrection.

Seek we, then, this cleansing, life-giving touch of Christ. Seek we Him in His all-powerful sacraments. Seek we Him where He, through His priests, looses the bands of sin and cleanses the memory by quickening it, and speaks His pardon. Seek Him where he says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go and sin no more," and leaves us His blessing, filling the soul full of consolation. Seek Him by prayer, calling down His grace, acting as in His presence, begging Him, above all things, by Himself to make thee like Himself. Then will He lead thee through thy daily duties, thy path of discipline and

trial, and at last He will bring thee home to His own seat of glory. Seek Him alone, and thou shalt find Him who first found thee, whose sacred feet were worn and wearied in searching for the lost and ruined sheep ; Him in whose bosom thou mayest repose, in whose embrace thou mayest rest, thy Saviour and thy God.

II. When Jesus came and touched the bier, they that bare it stood still. Here was an act of faith. They waited His word. Not a word was said, but the funeral-train suddenly stopped. This was the actual result of faith, the work of obedience which God rewards. And here it was at once rewarded by the raising of the dead one to life.

Now, to apply this lesson to ourselves, there are many times when Jesus comes and draws nigh to our souls with the richest blessing ; but His conferring that blessing depends entirely upon our immediate obedience. If we stop at once and wait His word, He gives the blessing, and we go on rejoicing. But if we neglect His voice and pass on, we leave Him who came to bless us, and so we lose much of His consolation. And this, no doubt, we often do, when

the ways of His providence, the warnings of His ministers, or His secret inspirations, draw us to new acts of duty, to sacrifices for His sake, to prayer, to fasting, to almsgiving, to the more careful confession of our sins. He is ever about us, ever leading us; and yet how do we lean to our own wisdom, how do we follow our own guidance! How few of us come up even to what we know to be His will! This is our waywardness; and this, alas! is our great loss. We grieve Him who is our best friend, and lose that grace which would make us holier and better and wiser. Our spiritual life is made up of losses and gains, and God only may tell where we stand. We do not grow steadily, we fail to get a clean conscience, and so we fail to be thoroughly sincere.

O! my brethren, who shall tell what we lose by this neglect, by this want of faith? Earnestness dies away, and tenderness of conscience gives place to worldly aims, self-pleasing hopes, uneasy self-will. We live not for God, but for self; and the heart goes not out to seek and enjoy the treasures of Christ. Him whom our souls should love, we see not; because we wait not for Him, because we do not cherish the

words of His mouth, because we are not ready to leave all things here and follow Him. Yet, in all His grace and truth, behold He standeth at the door of our hearts, and His omniscient eye seeth the swellings and tumults of that deep within us which men cannot read. He knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are but dust. O! listen in prayer and silence for His voice, and when He speaks, obey.

III. But, my brethren, this miracle speaks a lesson of consolation at every burial of the dead. When we go forth to the grave with the bodies of those we love, Jesus has compassion on *us* likewise, and says unto us, weep not; "I am the Resurrection and the Life." He who died to overcome death will raise us from the sleep of death, sharers of His own immortality. Henceforth, since He has died, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. We sorrow not as those who have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. Though hard is the pain and cold is the couch of death, yet that pain is sanctified, since the flesh of the Son of God was torn with the nail and racked with the cross; and that couch is

but the resting-place of refreshing sleep, since Jesus could not be holden there. Let the bereaved but realize the resurrection, and the wounds of affliction shall be only the salutary tokens of His love, who weeps with those that weep, and sanctifies the pain He sends. Who ever endured more marvellous pain than He who suffered, sinless, not for Himself, but for our salvation? What mere mortal ever endured more agonizing bereavement than *she* whose singular lot it was to bring forth the incarnate God? The sword pierced through her soul, and her grief did but add to the Redeemer's woe.

As the poor widow of Naim went back overwhelmed with joy that her son was alive again, so let us go from the grave where faith leaves the sleeping believer, rejoicing that the end of partings will soon come, that in a more glorious home the servants of Jesus shall awake in righteousness to see God; for precious in the sight of God is the death of His saints, and precious is the mouldering yet living dust of those whose life is hid with Christ in God.

IV. Another lesson which this miracle conveys is one addressed, not to the bereaved

mourner only, but to all persons at all times, in that it speaks of resurrection from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. Things in nature are of themselves intended to be emblematic. The death of the body but aptly signifies the spiritual death of the soul in sin. There are three deaths spoken of in holy scripture: the death of the body, the death of the soul in sin, and the death of both body and soul in hell. The first is a shadow of the second; and as there are signs and forerunners of natural death, so there are like tokens of spiritual death. Coldness, want of feeling, and unconsciousness are marks, in both cases, of that fearful change which kills the body and destroys the soul. We know the way, in and through Christ, to rise from this death of sin to a spiritual life. It is that mysterious resurrection which the quickening spirit works in the church. The resurrection of the body is its type. So one of the early doctors of the church likens the three resurrections which are recorded in the gospels to the three states of sin from which, by His power, sinners are recovered. The daughter of Jairus, just dead in the house, is like the soul consenting to sin; the young man upon his bier is like

that soul, not only intending, but acting out sin; and Lazarus, four days dead and laid in his grave, is likened to the inveterate sinner continuing in sin, corrupt and noisome, while evil custom lies as a stone upon the grave, and its old sinful habits, like grave-clothes, wrap round the dead. From each of these states the voice, and touch, and power of Christ can raise the sinner, and each is a fearful state, tending to the eternal loss of all.

And in this miracle, who are the bearers that carry forth the sinner to the grave of sin? Evil habits, which are sometimes likened to evil spirits, or any of those vices which are found in the state of mortal sin, as presumption on God's mercy, blindness to warnings, trust in a long life, harsh judgments of another's sin; or, briefly, hope and fear, joy and sorrow. There are but these four to bear us into the region of peace and light, or down to the depths below.

Hope set on things of the world, fear of temporal losses, joy in earthly gains, sorrow in the absence of them,—these bear the soul in the bier, which is a dead conscience, wherein, as in a bed, is laid one lost in mortal sin, unless Christ in His mercy should meet it and touch

the bier, and say, Awake, thou sleeper, and arise from the dead. Then the sinner shall arise and speak, making confession of his sins, and the lost child is restored to his widowed mother, the church.

Behold, my brethren, the church weeps before God for the sinfulness of her children. The daughter of Zion sits in desolation, for her children love the world and the things of sense. If there be one here who is like unto this young man upon his bier, not only consenting to sin but acting it out, and on his way to the grave of sin, O! let him know that now Jesus speaks and bids him arise ere he be laid in lower deeps, where sensuality, like the hardened earth, shall cover him and weigh him down as he corrupts in transgression. Why shall any die in sin? Why shall the spouse of Christ weep day and night for children recreant to their vows, careless of their gifts, reckless of their souls, cold in the service of Christ? Let us awake and seek in earnest for a new life. Let us seek to subdue every remnant of sin in our hearts, that God may reign wholly within us. Let us not seek the world, nor life, nor health, nor even spiritual joy, but God, and Him only. More glorious

than nature's resurrection is the growth of the soul in grace, where holy affections flourish and the manifold fruits of the spirit come forth. And O! what more barren thing in all God's creation than the sinner's heart, the prey of all evil, the home of that worst desolation, the loss of God and all goodness! What widow, weeping for an only child, can feel that bitterness which the sinner ought to feel for the loss of his soul?

Leave me not, O! Lord, to be buried in forgetfulness of Thee, but come and meet me by Thy providence, and touch me with Thy hands. Let me hear Thy sweet consoling voice, and be strengthened again to rise, that being by miracle made partaker of the first resurrection, I may become partaker of the second also, and ascend to Thy glorious presence, from which all death shall flee away.

SERMON XXXVI.

HYPOCRISY.

S. LUKE, xiv. 1-11.

For the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

OUR blessed Lord was perfectly strict in His obedience to the Jewish law. He came to fulfil all justice, and so He made Himself subject to every precept of the Mosaic ritual. Though that ritual was about to pass away and be more blessedly fulfilled in the Christian church, yet, while it stood, it demanded obedience as God's institution. But the Scribes and Pharisees prided themselves on their ritual observances, thinking, by a formal obedience to the letter of the law, to make up for neglect of weightier matters. Our Saviour often rebuked their formality, pronouncing His severest woes upon their hypocrisy. They tithed the smallest herbs, as mint, anise, and cummin; but neglected mercy, charity, and faith. Priding themselves

on their own strictness, they were harsh and censorious in their judgments of others. And all their works they paraded before men, as if to call attention to their virtues. Whatever they did was tainted with this hypocrisy.

In the gospel for this day there is a marked rebuke of this great sin, by a miracle and by a parable.

While our Lord was eating bread, in the house of one of the chief of the Pharisees, on the Sabbath-day, a certain man came before Him who had the dropsy. They watched Him, as they constantly did, to find something against Him; and now they were waiting to see if He would heal this sick man on the Sabbath. Already they accused Him in their thoughts, and Jesus, who knew their thoughts, answered to their *thoughts*: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?" They were confounded that thus their secret thoughts should have been read, and they could say nothing. "They held their peace." And Jesus took him and healed him and let him go, and answered them, saying, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath-day?" The preservation of an

animal's life was no offence in their eyes ; but a deed of mercy, the healing of the sick, was a transgression of the law. This was a strange perversion of their consciences. Could there be any thing more agreeable to God's will than such a deed of mercy ? Who can raise the sick but God only ? God who worketh hitherto, always preserving what He creates, always and unceasingly upholding His creatures, even God the Creator they had arraigned for a transgression of His own law !

But Jesus was man as well as God, and being under the law, He, by this use of His divine power, had not transgressed the law. The Sabbath was not broken by a miracle which relieved the suffering and showed forth the power of God. Deeds of necessity, mercy, and charity were permitted and accepted by God.

The blind Pharisees, however, looked to the letter of the command and their own traditions, and forgot the spiritual meaning of the law. They seemed to think only of a few outward acts as fulfilling all God's will, and on this outward obedience they rested their salvation. Our Saviour tells His disciples, " Except your justice exceed the justice of the Scribes and Phar-

isees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”*

The parable which our Lord immediately put forth is in close connection with this miracle, and was intended as a rebuke of their pride and hypocrisy. They thought themselves far above the publicans and common Jews; and they were like unto those who, called to a wedding, thought themselves to be the first and chiefest guests. They chose out the first seats and the most honorable places at the feast, and thought themselves highly exalted in the kingdom of God. They loved to be seen in places of honor and distinction. But they were to be displaced. Their pride was to suffer an entire humiliation. The master of the feast was to come and bid them give place to guests more honorable than they, and they with shame were to find that even the lowest room was too good for their deserts. So by a parable, drawn from their own customs, our Saviour rebuked their daily sin, and taught them that the wisest course was the course of humility. “When thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest place, that when he who invited thee cometh, he may say unto

* S. Matt., v. 20.

thee, Friend, go up higher. Then shalt thou have glory in the presence of them that sit at table with thee." Now they could, with a calm face, rebuke another's sin, and even accuse Him who was without sin. But even the publicans and harlots were to go into the kingdom of God before them.

Now, dear brethren, this righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, the conduct which to them seemed perfect, was far from being acceptable to God. As the Lord hath said, our righteousness must exceed it, or we cannot hope for the rewards of the life to come. We must beware, then, of this leaven of hypocrisy which we have seen in them, as from their example we may know something of its danger.

Observe, then, that our Saviour did not condemn any of their works. Their strict observance of the minutest requisitions of the law was in itself required by God. "These things," said he, "ye ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone." It was not what they did, but what they neglected to do, which showed their hypocrisy. They trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. Love to God and love to man were not

ruling in their hearts. They did not do all things for the glory of God, but for their own glory, and to be seen of men. And this self-righteous spirit was proof against the plainest warnings. They had gone on filling up the measure of their iniquity, through all God's chastisements persevering in sin ; so that upon them rested the blood of the prophets.

And yet, no doubt, the obedience of the Pharisees puts many of us to shame. They were strict to do what the law required before men, moral and upright, and in many respects examples to others. They were the straitest sect of the Jews, who made it their pride to let no tittle of the law escape them.

How does such obedience compare with our carelessness in doing what is now required of us? Surely their external obedience is a reproach to *us*, who live under higher grace and in fuller light. Many among Christians presume upon God's favor as much as they did, who do not even compare with them in their measure of obedience. Many neglect both outward and inward duties, and still think themselves righteous, and look down upon others. In the prevalence of careless living, men think

less of sin, fear little for the future, and presume every thing on the mercy of God; as if there was to be no judgment, or *that* judgment were to be a mere form. It is to be feared that even the Pharisee's blindness is exceeded by not a few among Christians.

The Pharisee did not err in thinking that all that was required would strictly be exacted, and therefore must strictly be performed. And among us, my brethren, the same strictness is needful, since God's holy law and the requirements of His church alike demand our entire obedience. Nothing must be neglected which now we may do to fulfil the will of God. He that is faithful in little is faithful also in that which is great. And there is nothing *little* which God commands. In all things it is true that he that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

How, then, must our justice exceed the justice of the Scribes and Pharisees? Our obedience needs to be as strict as theirs was, but it must be discharged in a different manner and for a different motive. Hypocrisy, in our Saviour's words, was the leaven which pervaded all their actions. Self-

love prompted them, and for selfish ends they were performed.

This snare into which they fell it is our great duty to avoid, by learning to obey God for His own sake, and by banishing from our minds every motive short of *this*. Strictness in all our duties must be sought, because we are laboring in God's sight, before whose omniscient eyes all our works are to be judged. We must strive to do all that God requires of us in the stations in which He has placed us. We must be as careful about our duties when in private as when in public. Perhaps there are few of us who think themselves in danger of this sin, and yet there is much more hypocrisy among Christians than at first sight we would think. To be sincere and earnest in our professions, in our confessions of sin, and in our promises of amendment, is much more than perhaps we realize. The holiest language passes through our lips, the most fervent prayers and praises. Are these *real* in our mouths? I do not ask whether we exhaust the depth of our supplications, but whether we really make them our own. We confess that we have sinned and are far from God. Do we think of any thing in which we

have sinned, or do we express a general unworthiness which is no burden to us? There can be no such thing as a sinner feeling a general unworthiness. He must feel his sins *individually*, or he does not feel them at all.

At every communion we solemnly promise to amend our lives, to forsake all our sins. Is this promise earnestly made, if no fruits of holy living are the result? There is danger of our going through the most solemn acts of faith, hope, and contrition, without feeling in our hearts what our tongues express.

Formality consists not in the use of those ritual observances which God commands and the church enjoins upon us. But formality consists in doing with our lips or hands the thing in which our heart has no part. Formality profanes God's sacred institutions, the outward signs which He has blessed.

There are many who look to their obedience upon one point to atone for transgression upon another. *Love*, the fulfilling of the whole law, does not rule in the soul that can thus excuse any besetting sin or disobedience. The Pharisee could not bear to see our Saviour's miracle on the Sabbath, but judgment upon his own

self-righteous thoughts did not enter into his mind.

Together with a partial obedience, censoriousness is apt to show itself in those who fall into the sin of hypocrisy. The truly humble man finds it hard to judge another ; for, wherein he condemns another, he fears that he may condemn himself. So all harsh judgment of another arises from a false estimate of one's self. "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone," were our Saviour's words of calm yet withering rebuke to those who, sinners themselves, had no mercy for a fellow-sinner. *He cannot feel his own need of mercy who hath no mercy for another. Must he not expect judgment without mercy ?* If we find in ourselves any such tokens of hypocrisy, let us seek before God to open our hearts, that He may try and prove them. He will disclose to us much of our own evil hearts which now we do not know. There is much to be done by each one of us ; and whatever our hands find to do, let us do it with all our might. Directly opposed to the sin of hypocrisy is the Christian grace of *humility*. Self-knowledge leads to lowliness and meekness ; and so, if once we learn how

weak we are, we shall esteem others better than ourselves. Who has ever explored the fearful depths of his own sin, or felt his selfishness, waywardness, weakness, and inconstancy, that did not wonder at the forbearance of God? Let us, then, seek for such humiliation on account of our sins, that we may fear to be high-minded, that we may have no heart for the show and vanity of the world. Seek we steadily to *do* what God *wills*, using faithfully the means of grace, diligently performing our religious duties; and if we are in earnest He will lead us in the steps of His blessed Son, that in all things we may look unto Him. Pray we, then, for His preventing, all-sustaining, all-encircling grace. The Spirit of the Lord, dwelling in our hearts, shall be as a candle illuminating the inmost recesses of our souls. By the divine light we may search out Satan's hidden snares, by the divine power confound his arts, and the Lord shall one day subdue him utterly under our feet.

“Thou art worthy, O Lord! because Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God in Thy blood.”

SERMON XXXVII.

THE CURE OF THE PARALYTIC.

“But that you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith He to the man sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house.”—S. MATTHEW, ix. 6.

For the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

OUR Lord had crossed the sea of Galilee for the city of Capernaum, and had come to the house where he commonly dwelt. Many suppose this house to have been the dwelling of the apostle Peter. And immediately, as S. Mark tells us, “many came together, so that there was no room, not even at the door, and He spoke the word unto them.” “And behold they brought to Him one sick of the palsy, lying in a bed.” “And when they could not reach Him on account of the multitude, they uncovered the roof where He was, and opening it,

they let down the bed wherein the man sick of the palsy lay.”*

Such is the full account of three evangelists concerning the manner in which this paralytic was brought before our Lord. Faith in His healing and divine power had brought them so far, and under such difficulties, to seek the poor man's recovery. So it is written that Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick man, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee; be of good heart.” No doubt the sick man had faith, and had desired thus to be brought to the feet of his Redeemer; and here his faith was to be rewarded. But they who brought him had faith also, and Jesus had regard to their faith. Thus we may learn an important lesson in the economy of redemption, that not only do men's prayers and works avail for themselves, but for others also: since we are all one in Christ; since, being His members, we are partakers in the mediatorial office of the great Intercessor. Our prayers are accepted for others, and even our good deeds bring blessings on many, and affect the whole body of the church. All who are in Christ, living or departed, are helped by

* S. Mark, ii. 1-5.

each others faithful intercession. Thus now do men bring the case of their friends, who are laid perfectly helpless, and set them before Jesus. Many are in conditions in which they cannot help themselves, but depend on the aid of their friends ; sick men, so overwhelmed with disease that they cannot pray ; helpless children and hardened sinners, paralyzed in affection and will. All these may have some to pray for them and bring them before Him whose compassions never fail. How blessed is this privilege ! We do not live to ourselves. We live for all who are one in Christ, when we live for Christ. Our works, our prayers, may be telling on the souls of others, may even be the means of saving some we love. And we ourselves do not know how much we owe of comfort, peace, or joy, not only to the prayers of saints in light or the care of angels, but to the intercession of the faithful here below. Thus we are taught to pray always for each other, and especially when we draw nigh to the altar to join in the adorable sacrifice of the "Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world." Wonderful is this mystery of the communion of saints, by which "we dwell in Him, and He in

us." O! when once the veil of sense shall fall from our earth-dimmed eyes, how shall we wonder that through things temporal we did not more clearly see the things eternal! In the midst of angels and saints, in the presence of God who is within us, verily members of the eternal Son, how do we grovel mid earthly vanities, as if they were our end, as if nothing were real but things of sense!

Observe now our Lord's language to this paralytic. "He said unto him, Son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee." One despised and feeble, and entirely crippled in all his limbs, He addresses as son, even therefore His son, because his sins were forgiven. We know that sin is the cause of disease and death, and we know, moreover, that many diseases are sent us as punishments of sin. The sins of this man may have been such as to have produced palsy, or this visitation may have been inflicted in consequence of sin; yet certainly the forgiveness of sin must interpose before he is healed. And this is true of many of our Lord's miracles. The cause of the disease, the sufferer's sin, is first remitted, and then the bodily malady is cured. Surely our Redeemer hath borne our infirmities

and carried our sicknesses. From the effects of sin, even in this life, He would teach us how deadly an evil it is, how nothing can save the sinner but the power of His all-atoning sacrifice.

The Scribes and Pharisees murmur at this language, and in their thoughts they accuse Him of blasphemy. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" Miracles had been wrought by the prophets, but sins could be forgiven by God alone. Yet it was the very and eternal God who stood before them, reading their thoughts, and working in His grace. "Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk?" "But," said our Lord, "that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, then he saith to the man sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." The miracle was proof of His power to forgive sin; and the man, restored and forgiven, went his way, while the multitude glorified God who had given such power unto men.

The great lesson, then, to be learned from this cure of the paralytic, concerns the sore disease of sin and its forgiveness. The sick man aptly represents the sinner, who, until his sins

are forgiven, is like to a man paralyzed and incapable of exerting his will for good. His sins bind him down, and he cannot rise but by the power of Christ. Friends may but bring him unto Christ, who alone can loose the bands of sin. And when our Lord was on the earth it was indeed blessed to go unto Him, and at His sacred feet to beg for pardon. What precious days were those when a sinner might see his Saviour, and learn from His very lips the words of forgiveness !

Yet, my brethren, you will remember how our Lord gave a greater blessing to *faith* than to *believing sight*. “Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.” Greater blessings have come to us, since He ascended, than were given to men while He was on the earth ; for we have now the blessings he died to procure for us. He ascended to give gifts unto men, that from His glory He might send us all grace. And now we who are laden with sin may have as perfect an assurance of pardon as if He Himself should speak, as when on earth He said, “Thy sins are forgiven thee.” As the Son of Man, He forgave this paralytic “that ye may know the Son of Man hath power on earth

to forgive sins." He who is both God and Man, in his priestly office dispenses pardon. This office has been communicated unto His ministry, who now upon earth represent Him and discharge His sacerdotal work before men. "The Son of Man hath power upon earth to forgive sin." The very words, as S. Ambrose notices, refer to the power given to His ministers upon earth to forgive sins. "As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I *you*." "Whosoever sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." It is the Son of Man on earth, in His church, who now by His priests remits and retains sin. This power hath been given unto men to be the agents of the Lord in the economy of grace, to be stewards of the mysteries of Christ.

Much cause have we to render thanks unto God for the cure of this man sick of the palsy, since to us who are sick with sin it gives such blessed hopes. Jesus, who loved us so as to give Himself for us, has left power on earth for the forgiveness of our sins. And as He had mercy on the poor paralytic, and said unto him, "Son, be of good heart," so in like loving-kindness will He receive us who truly repent and earnestly

desire to be healed. We are indeed sons of God, since in holy baptism we put on Christ and were new-created in His likeness. If we have been rebellious sons, and have sinned against our new nature, the deeper is our guilt and greater is our loss. For such sins were stains upon the wedding-garment Jesus had given us. Much need have we to seek for cleansing ere the Bridegroom cometh, ere that great marriage-feast when none shall enter who are not clothed in linen pure and white. These are the words of the Spirit.

O ! as we would seek the Son of Man were He visibly on earth, so let us constantly seek His voice of pardoning mercy, where, through His priests, He binds up the broken-hearted and grants a free remission. Have faith, fellow-sinner, in the promise of thy Lord, in the power of His holy sacraments. Many are sick and faint among us ; many are bound hand and foot by the sins of their past life ; many are dead in trespasses and sins. Many know not the cause of their spiritual weakness ; many are in darkness and see no light. Sins like a thick cloud shut out the light of heaven. Sin palsies the will, darkens the conscience, seduces the

affections. Many know not that they are sick. How often is there a fair exterior, when some secret sin, like malignant disease, preys on the seat of life, and quiet even is a token of impending death!

Judge not, my brother, by what men may say or think of thee. Go deep into thine heart and search out the depths of selfishness, conceit, and pride. Dissemble not with God. What hast thou there that thou wouldst blush to own before men and angels? Cover not the sin which flatters thee in the very presence of God. Seek not to lead thyself, for thyself art the sinner. Who would be deceived when eternity is at stake?

Around the Lord of life, when He dwelt on earth, thou couldst have seen a crowd of sick and dying, of publicans and sinners. They that were sick of divers diseases and plagues, the lame, the lunatic, the paralytic, all sought to see Him and be healed. What a picture this of Him who came to save and those He saves!

Why do not now the sick seek Him who is spiritually present with us? Why fly not sinners unto their Saviour? How many of those who have been baptized into Christ, and born

anew in His image, are like this paralytic—helpless by reason of sin, powerless forever if they look not unto Jesus for mercy ! This poor man was brought by four ; and when Jesus could not be seen for the multitude, faith surmounted all difficulties, and through the roof he was let down in the presence of the Lord. Thus it is a toilsome, painful work to recover health which our own sins have undermined, to regain the strength we have thrown away. But it is too blessed a reward that through all we may at last be whole, that with all our unworthiness we may at last be made worthy to draw nigh the Redeemer's glory, to shine in His purifying presence. Yet should any of us be brought back from our wanderings, should any of us be healed, let us take heed that we *sin no more*. Shall those who have sinned and have been forgiven fall again into the snare of the fowler who watcheth for souls ? Perhaps, my brethren : we know not how careful we ought to be. There are evil angels about us who may take more care to ruin our souls than we to save them. With God and good angels we need not fear, unless we cease to watch, and sleep in the time of our greatest danger. Fair

are the reasonings and specious the temptations of this evil world. Yet who has not learned its vanity ; who does not know its exceeding emptiness ? But behold there is a fulness of all things desirable in Him whom the sinner must seek. On Him rest thy load, thou that art wearied with sin, thou that sufferest for thine own sins. He will heal thy backslidings, He will comfort thee freely. He thy God who looketh into thee, knoweth thy sorrow, seeth thy struggles, will bless thy true penitence. Henceforth thou art not alone. He who beareth thy infirmities is with thee. Only with a firm and patient heart walk on in the path wherein He guides thee. Be of good heart, even when the weight of all thy sin comes up before thee, when desolation hangs upon thee, when the memory of thine evil days haunts thee, when thine exceeding nothingness overwhelms thee. This is thy purification, the Jordan of thy perfect cleansing. This is that merciful rod which thou must kiss, the proof of thy great physician's love. " Go, and sin no more."

SERMON XXXVIII.

THE CONVERSION OF S. PAUL.

“Benjamin, a ravenous wolf, in the morning shall eat the prey, and in the evening shall divide the spoil.”—GENESIS, xlix. 27.

For the Feast of the Conversion of S. Paul.

THESE prophetic words of the patriarch Jacob have been applied by S. Augustine to the greatest of the sons of Benjamin, whose raging persecution of the early flock of Christ is so remarkable a fulfilment of them. As the dying seer looked forward to the times of the Messiah, and spoke of the lion of the tribe of Judah, the Shiloh who should gather the nations together, “washing His robe in wine and His garment in the blood of the grape,” it seems not wrong to apply his words concerning Benjamin to him whose wonderful conversion we this day celebrate. Surely they have never been so fully accomplished as in Saul of Tarsus, who “rav-

aged the church, entering into houses and dragging men and women to prison," and "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," whose terrible rage was renewed every morning and unsatiated every evening.

We are called, then, to contemplate the work of God's almighty grace, when the ravening wolf was changed into a lamb, and the fierce persecutor became an earnest believer and a glorious apostle.

S. Paul was born in Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia, which had received from Augustus the freedom of Rome, so that he was both a Jew and a Roman citizen. At his circumcision he received the name of Saul, which he retained until after his conversion. In his early years he was sent to Jerusalem and brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, where he was trained in the strictest sect of the Jewish religion. Thus it was that the zeal of a Pharisee led him to emulate all others in opposition to Christ. When the holy martyr Stephen gave up his life he was there consenting to his death and keeping the garments of those who slew him. The prayers of S. Stephen

were heard for *him*, and in the place of the holy deacon God raised up an apostle. You remember, my brethren, how, in after years, he too was stoned and brought nigh to death, from which naught but a miracle rescued him. And this, no doubt, was a merciful punishment for the part he had taken in slaying the first martyr of Christ, serving to remind him from what a depth of sin the love of God had saved him.

But sentence against an evil work was not executed speedily, and, after the martyrdom of S. Stephen, Saul did but rage the more. The Christians at Jerusalem were dragged from their houses, loaded with chains, scourged in the synagogues, and compelled by torments to blaspheme. Saul had set himself to cut off all the disciples and extinguish the religion of Christ. He had obtained permission and authority from the chief priests to go into other cities and to bring any Christians whom he could find, bound unto Jerusalem, so that there should be no retreat for those who confessed the holy name of Jesus. For this purpose he goes to Damascus; but the strong man armed is subdued by One mightier than he, and the rage

of the persecutor is quelled by the love of the persecuted !

Almost at the end of his journey, as he came near Damascus, he was stopped in his mad career, and stricken to the earth in penitence and humiliation. There shone a light upon him, above the brightness of the sun ; and the Almighty Lord was present to reprove and convince him of his sin, to change his rage against Him into a burning zeal for His glory, and to send him on the work of His own ministry and apostleship. He heard the words of Jesus whom he had persecuted, and he was obedient unto the heavenly vision. He arose from the earth, and sight was gone. God's light had shown him the darkness of his soul, and the world of sense was shut from his view that he might look within and be alone with God. The Lord Jesus led him in triumph into Damascus, and gave him for three days the burial of repentance, that in fasting and prayer he might sorrow for his sins of thought and word and deed, ere he could attain the baptism of the Holy Trinity. At the end of this time the washing of regeneration was prepared for him, and Jesus sent His minister to speak peace unto

his soul, that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

This Ananias, as S. Austin tells us, was both a disciple and priest of Christ, and though we know little concerning him, yet he is commemorated by the Eastern church as bishop of Damascus and martyr.

The life of S. Paul from his baptism is so well known to us all that it need not here be dwelt upon. We know what is written of his glorious course, but much more is known unto God. Through every city and land, even to the ends of the known world, he carried the gospel of salvation, and zeal unquenchable was the chief characteristic of him who once had raged so bitterly against the disciples of the Lord. It is supposed that, excepting our divine Master and His holy Mother, no one ever suffered more than he did ; for his cup was ever full of peril and pain such as would befit the sacrifice to which he was called. The marks of Christ were in his body, ever exposed to the chain and the scourge. He was crucified with Christ, and was ever as one dead to the world. He did not live, to use his own words, but Christ lived in him. By such a life, as well as by his private

discipline of fasting and mortification, self-love was wholly cast out, and he was led by the Lord to the triumphs of His Almighty strength, to the glories of His spiritual conquest. Such was his course and such his good fight of faith, until, to all his other rewards, he added the crown of a martyr. He was beheaded at Rome, on the 29th of June, in the 65th year of our Lord, and suffered on the same day with the great apostle S. Peter. On the ground where he suffered a church was afterwards erected, which even now bears his name, and which in our own day, by the labors of our saintly Pontiff, has been rebuilt and gloriously adorned.

This day, however, my brethren, does not call us to consider his birth into glory, his exhaustless labors, or his abundant sufferings. The church calls us to give thanks unto God for his wonderful conversion, for his birth into the kingdom and household of Christ. We are bidden to confess the power of divine love, which transformed the great persecutor of the church into the great apostle of the gentiles. We are to admire the wonders God wrought in this light of the world and chosen vessel of His grace, and ourselves to fall down in humble

obedience, that the power which glorified him may work in us. For let us be assured that the same grace may be ours in all its fulness and power.

About S. Paul's conversion there was indeed an open display of God's glory, in the light which shone from heaven, and in the voice of Jesus, which was heard by even his outward ears. This was for the sake of the afflicted church, and for those who were with him in unbelief, that they might feel the power they were resisting. But the same arm of strength has bowed all our hearts, if we be indeed followers of the Lord Jesus. The same voice of Him whom sinners crucify afresh has spoken unto us, and it is the light from above which has both revealed our darkness and guided our feet into the way of peace.

For just persons who need no repentance there is no need of conversion. But for those who have grown up in sin, as well as for those who, early baptized into Christ, have fallen away, there must be a thorough and true conversion. Just so far as any one has sinned, just so far must he turn back, and in sorrow retrace his steps. He must call his own dark ways to

remembrance, and turn his feet unto the testimonies of the Lord. And the soul of the sinner shall never be enlightened until he thus submit himself unto his offended and yet loving Redeemer. The thirsty, hungry souls of those who have never known God must here be filled by the food of life, which alone can support them, or they shall hunger and thirst forever. Sinners must turn unto God and live, or they must eternally die. They must listen to the warning voice which is heard within them, while the day of mercy lasts, and freely choose the paths they have alway rejected. They must have new hearts and new lives, and be wholly turned from the love of sin. There must be this complete and thorough change of life, or there can be no hope in the day when God comes in the darkness of death and the terrors of judgment.

And for us, my brethren, who were born anew in early years, there comes a fearful warning on this day. Have we alway continued stable in Christ, or have we turned away from the holy commandment delivered to us; or, having turned away, have we returned unto Him who so loved us as to wash us from our

sins in His own blood ? What is now the state of our souls in His sight who came to purify us by His presence when all was dark and disordered ? When Saul turned from his course of violence, he had not sinned as we have, against the grace of regeneration : he had not stained the cleanness of baptism.

Yet God, most holy, yearns over us who are His children, and Jesus, the Good Shepherd, seeks to bring back the lost sheep in His own arms. If, having sinned, you have now been restored to Him who sought and found you, give thanks to the God of saints, and praise Him for His all-powerful grace. Now there is a light around you which will reveal every dark spot and stain, and lead you with true contrition to follow the gracious voice which bade you turn and live.

S. Paul's conversion is the type and pattern of all true conversions to God. Light comes from heaven ; the Saviour's voice is heard ; the sinner feels his darkness and unworthiness ; and God cleanses him, pouring in His own divine love, and imparting to him the likeness of a son by the saving waters of regeneration. Or if it be the sinner against baptismal light, then

He quickens the dying flame, opening heaven by the keys of remission, and restoring super-human love in that tribunal wherein God anticipates His own just judgment.

O! rejoice as well to day for the grace of God in thine own soul as for the triumph of Jesus in the wonderful conversion of S. Paul. And if thou canst not rejoice, pray that thou mayest weep, that after a night of sorrow there may come a morning of joy. God sometimes comes to us in a pillar of a thick cloud, showing to the soul that turned from Him its utter darkness, and then revealing the gladness of His light, as, one by one, the idols of sense are cast out, and the scales fall from eyes which were bound to the earth. When, dear brethren, shall we know ourselves? Shall we shrink from the sight in the days of health and of quiet, in days when mercy may be freely gained, and wait till the strength of mind and body are gone, and nothing is left us but to grapple with death? Now, even now, let us turn unto the Lord with all our hearts, and anew give up ourselves to the work of our salvation. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord,

for he will have mercy, and to our God, for He will mercifully pardon.

Nor let us doubt that grace will triumph at the last, that the Lord of all will in us subdue every power of sin. He who wrought so wonderfully in S. Paul does already work in us, and will lead us on wherever, with pure hearts, we are ready to follow Him, if we turn not away and shrink from His touch and rod.

But if we do not seek this, His converting power, if we cling to things forbidden and hope to serve two masters, there is no such joy in store for us. Love cannot have its perfect work, we cannot enter into the company of those who are to sit down and reign with Christ in the kingdom of His Father. O, how much we need, in our day and country, the zeal and fidelity of S. Paul! Had we any laborers like him, the desert would bloom and the wilderness blossom as the rose. How shall we work for God if we are not formed after his model, and learn not, in the depth of our souls, the greatness of God and the nothingness of things created? May the Lord of the harvest send forth such laborers into His harvest!

SERMON XXXIX.

THE SORROWS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

‘Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His Mother, and His Mother’s sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.’—S. JOHN, xix. 25.

For the Feast of the Seven Dolors.

It is quite evident to any reflecting mind that sympathy for the sufferings of Christ could not exist in our hearts without a true compassion for the sorrows of His Mother. Were we to read the history of any mere man, martyred for truth and holiness, and to hear how his mother followed her only child through persecution and torture to the last sad scene, when the maternal heart, unable to save or relieve, almost broke with grief, we could not be unmoved. Now it is not the history of a mere man, but the passion of our God. It is not the sorrow of an ordinary mother, but the woe of the immaculate

Virgin who had by miracle brought into the world her Creator. Well then does the church twice in the year propose to our contemplation these wonderful sorrows—once in the commemoration of the scene of Calvary, when all eyes are fixed upon the divine victim, and again in the Pentecostal season, lest we forget the grief of the Mother in the more dreadful torments of her Son.

For we are too apt to undervalue this grief, and in our thoughts of the holy Virgin to lose sight of her sad and weary pilgrimage of suffering. She seems to us like the untouched lily of the valley, like the fragrant rose of Sharon, the woman of prophecy, crowned with the sun, coming upon our darkened world, fair as the morning and terrible as an army set in battle array. All around her seems to breathe of loveliness, and exhale the freshness of Eden before blight or decay had touched its fair fields or blooming flowers. And so she was in truth the morning star, the second Eve who with her virgin foot crushed the head of the malignant serpent. Yet was her way a sad and weary one. Clouds and darkness were around her pure soul, the hosts of evil never ceased the bat-

tle against her, the storms of earth beat furiously upon her habitation. She was taken into the counsels of God, brought very near to the consuming fire of His throne, and her whole life shadowed with the great sorrows of her divine Son. Entering into the woes which redeemed the world as none other could, no mere creature has suffered as she did, or tasted the cup of bereavement which fell to her portion. The contemplation of her griefs will lead us to new gratitude to Him who died for us, and teach us many salutary lessons for our own struggle with temptation. Let us reflect devoutly on the sorrows of the Blessed Virgin. We shall see how they far exceed all others, and what wonderful exhortations and consolations they contain.

I. The church is accustomed to speak of her seven dolors, since from these seven fountains flowed the tide of woe which overflowed her heart. They are as the capital points in a life so remarkable, and to them can be traced the sadness ever expressed in her tranquil face or breathed continually from her ever-peaceful heart. They were not momentary, but lasting, and they stand out with distinctness in a his-

tory which has nothing of the world's grandeur and absolutely none of its consolations.

Three concern what are usually the happy days of maternal joy, and the others the completion of the sacrifice in the scenes of Calvary. No mother's joy ever was or ever could be like Mary's. Not only was it a joy without a stain, but there has been no parallel to her, no such maternity as hers. Pure as the lilies undefiled of Eden, she knew the transports of a mother's love when she clasps her first-born, with her virginal innocence all untouched. Her child was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. And the infant which she carried at her breast was not only flesh of her flesh, He was also very God of very God. Who would not call, then, her lot happy, or who would compare her dignity to the splendor of any of earth's princes? But see where the great nativity takes place. Not in regal halls, not even in the plain comforts of a cottage-home; but in a stable, and a stable of the poor, among the beasts of burden. The lowly Virgin is driven, in her great hour of joy, from the habitations of men, and takes refuge among the unsinching oxen, who know their owner, and refuse not shelter to their God.

When she goes up to the temple with her oblation, the Holy Ghost speaks to her through the voice of prophecy. O, Mother most wonderful ! the saving victim is in thy hands ; but it is an offering of blood, and the sword that shall pierce His heart shall pierce thine also. Behold in His tiny hands already the marks of the nails, see on His divine brow the bleeding crown that is prepared for Him. Clasp thy child close in thine arms, and pillow His head on thy bosom, its only rest in this world of sin ; but thou canst not save Him from the scourge and the cross. Watch Him in His infant slumbers ; listen to the beating of His infant heart, already full of care and grief for the ingratitude of men. He loved the fallen race of man, and He loved thee and took His human nature of thee, and left the splendors of the heavenly court that men might take Him and nail Him to a gibbet. Such words were not forgotten. They fell upon the patient and humble heart of the Mother, and henceforward she lived on Calvary, and its deep shadows were ever over her.

A few days passed away, and the words of the prophet began to be fulfilled. The jealousy of Herod pursues the child, and seeks His death

before the time. "Arise," said the angel to Joseph, "and take the young child and His Mother, and fly into Egypt." So began the days of exile, the long and tedious journey through the wilderness, the trials and pains of a sojourn in the land of the infidel. Who shall tell the hardships of the tender Virgin in bodily fatigue, in every species of physical distress, in anguish at the indignities offered to her divine Son? But this was only the beginning of the fearful end, and they drew nearer every moment to the hill of frankincense, the mountain of sacrifice.

These two opening sorrows were the clouds which hung over the holy childhood and the peaceful home of Nazareth. Before the scene of the passion shall really commence, the faithful Mother shall learn a new lesson of bereavement. They go up to the temple, according to the law, and suddenly, on their return, Jesus is lost to her. The light of His smile and the comfort of His presence are withdrawn, and a darkness she had never known oppresses her heart. It was only for a time; but it was a precursor of days when loneliness more than human should be her portion, when she should dwell alone in the

desert of earth, and her beautiful one should wander without a shelter, among the wild beasts by night, and the more ferocious enemies by day. No Mother's arm should be allowed to save Him from the fury of His foes, no Mother's gentleness to wipe away His tears.

At last all the words of prophecy are fulfilled. The peace and silence of the holy home are broken. S. Joseph goes up to the bosom of Abraham, full of age and full of merit; Jesus goes to the Jordan to begin his ministry; and the Virgin remains alone, to meditate on God's ways, and to look forward to her terrible future. Now follow in quick succession the mysteries of woe. A thousand years are to God as one day, and one day as a thousand years. The innocent Lamb is seized, is dragged like a criminal through the streets, treading in His own blood, the victim of an infuriate mob. He is mocked, condemned to death, scourged, crowned with thorns. He goes to Calvary bearing on His bleeding shoulders the weight of the cross. The Mother met him on this way of sorrows, and at one glance beholds the tortures of His body and reads the sorrows of His heart. She follows Him through all; hears the insults of

the crowd, as they beat Him when He faints under His load, or mock Him with the title "King of the Jews," and waits on Calvary while they nail His hands and feet and hang Him up between heaven and earth. Then, when the sun withdraws his light, and the earthquake frightens the guilty murderers, she takes her station beneath the cross, looks up to the dying eyes of her child, and bows her soul with His to the holy will of God. Six long hours exhaust His strength, bring Him to the shadow of death, and her to the moment of her sad bereavement. O, what a moment for her! She is alone, without her Jesus, and His precious body lies stark and cold before her.

Yet not even this repose is granted to Mary in her hour of bitter sorrow. She may not quietly weep or silently gaze upon the features of her only love. Other mothers may, in this sad hour of death, grieve in peace, or the voice of sympathy and kindness shall be heard in the silent chamber, sacred by the touch of God. The Mother of the Most High shall have no such rest; for even while she weeps, remembering all the blessed past, never to return, the Roman centurion pierces the Heart of her dead child,

and the saving fountain of water and blood flows forth. Simeon's words were too true—the spear had gone through her very soul.

The last sorrow comes now, and fills up her cup of woe. The precious body is taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb. He who gives life to all mankind is under the power of death. The Mother performs the last sad offices of her great love, composes His precious limbs for the grave, and kisses for the last time His sacred lips. He is borne to the sepulchre, and the rock is rolled to the door and sealed with Pilate's seal. The bereaved and broken-hearted Virgin goes to her home at the house of S. John, more desolate every moment as the recollections of His love to her and His bitter sufferings bewilder her aching heart. “To what shall I compare thee, or to what shall I liken thee, O! daughter of Jerusalem? To what shall I equal thee, and how shall I console thee, O! Virgin, daughter of Sion? For vast as the sea is thy sorrow. Who shall heal thee?”

II. The grief of the holy Mother of God far exceeds all other human grief, and indeed bears no comparison to our common sorrows. No one has ever endured the tortures which were

heaped upon our Lord, and hence no other mother has been called to take part in such scenes. But the relation between Mary and Jesus lifts the pangs of her anguish far above our understanding, and leaves them in the mystery of the passion of the God-man. If the maternal tie be the strongest and tenderest in the human heart, how must Mary have loved Jesus,—she who was unfallen, redolent of the purity of paradise, and who had for her child her very God ! Angels and seraphs look with awe upon this filial and maternal relation, and cannot fathom its depths of divine and human love. How, then, shall they fathom the sorrow when these two hearts are torn apart by the cross, when the queen of angels and men is the mourner, and the Word incarnate the sufferer ? Well may we tremble as we look at Mary's tears, and from her terrible anguish learn how God loved us, how His Son suffered for us.

The immaculate Virgin had no other sorrows than those of her child. Conceived without sin, the evils of the fall could not touch her. No power of disease could cause the bloom to fade from her cheek or the light to grow dim in her beautiful eyes. Yet behold how pain and

resignation are written in her face; how sadness and yet perfect tranquillity are always painted on her features. Clouds of sorrow cover the sky of earth's purest daughter, and the holy joys which were her portion are tinged with bitterness. She ventured much when she said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done unto me according to Thy word." She came nearer to God than any other creature. She touched the "consuming fire," and received the baptism of blood wherewith He was baptized. All her sorrow was in the bitter life and painful death of Jesus; her maternity was wonderful, reaching to heaven; and her bereavement was in like manner beyond all the experiences of human affliction.

The fathers have also not failed to see how this queen of the martyrs is more than martyr in the agonies of the cross. He who upheld and consoled the martyrs in their tortures is the only cause of Mary's woe. How can He console, her when He must bring His soul to the dust of death, must cover his blessed head with darkness, must drink the cup of pain to its dregs? Though her heart be breaking, and her tears break His heart also He must go on

to the bitter end, must not hold back the angels of death, must be able to say, before God and man, "It is consummated." So, where confessors and martyrs look for consolation, Mary looks only to deepen her grief, only to stagger her very intelligence with the sight of such a victim writhing under such superhuman suffering.

To all this is to be added her comprehension of the divine ways, her knowledge of the future, springing from her innocence and union with God. All lay before her as in one view, from the early days of the incarnation, with something of the sight which makes all things present to the omniscient eye. Not even the prospect of resurrection and glory made the Son of God less a sufferer, and so the same prospect could not lessen in her eyes the dreadful ignominy of His passion. "The very recital of these woes," says S. Bernard, "melts even our rocky hearts. How, then, did her tender frame endure them? Wonder not that she is called a martyr in soul. But perhaps some one will say, Did she not know that He was to die, and did she not hope that He would rise again? Without doubt all was known to

her. But who art thou, and whence is thy wisdom, my brother, that thou shouldst wonder more at Mary weeping than at her Son suffering? He died in the body; she could not but die with Him in heart. Love caused her thus to die, love which has never had its equal, to which nothing on earth can be likened."

III. Lessons most useful can be gathered from the devout contemplation of Mary's sorrows. As Jesus died for our sins, and Mary suffered only in his agonies, can we not learn a deeper view of the great evil of our offences, and see how bitter a thing it is to depart from the living God? The eternal Father unsheathes the sword of vengeance against His only Son, spares not His blows, breaks the sweet heart of Jesus and the most loving heart of Mary, that by the precious blood He may wash and redeem our guilty souls. Who then can estimate the heinousness of sin in God's sight, when he looks at the holy Mother on Calvary and sees something of her appreciation of the cost of our redemption?

And our debt to that most patient Virgin is increased by the knowledge of her part in the passion. Not only has she prayed for us, not

only has she given us the example of all purity and heroic virtue, but she has also suffered for our sakes, and lived a life of sorrow, because her child was crucified for us, and her heart was inseparably joined to His. As we, then, remember her in the joys of Bethlehem, think of her in the glories of the resurrection, ever look up to her in the brightness of her starry throne, so let us not forget her beneath the cross. The sight will chasten us for the duties of life, for the remaining conflicts of our pilgrimage.

For we, too, must suffer; and it will be blessed for us if our afflictions shall be touched by her gentle hands and hallowed in the company of Jesus and Mary. O! when earth is dark by reason of bereavement, when the heart-strings are broken, when treasure after treasure goes to the grave, when friends fail, and sense loses its power to charm, how consoling will it be to be sheltered beneath Mary's mantle, to hear her maternal voice, and to learn of her to worship God's holy will, to set our hearts on Him who never fails us. Amid the darkness of our sorrows she who wept beneath the cross will open heaven to the eyes of faith, will cause

the light of the eternal city, our true home, to shine upon us, will open our ears to the celestial voices. Children of earth whom God has redeemed, arise and speed on your heavenward journey. The Red Sea of blood, the wilderness of affliction, the Jordan of death, but lie in your way to the Land of Promise. There joy shall be born from suffering, endless peace from the toils and strife of your pilgrimage.

SERMON XL.

THE NUPTIALS OF THE LAMB.

“The kingdom of heaven is like to a man, being a king, who made a marriage for his son.”—S. MATTHEW, xxii. 2.

For the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

THE parable contained in the gospel is an apt illustration of the ways of God under the new law, and His purposes of mercy in the establishment of His church, while it exhibits at the same time the obstinacy and ingratitude of man. The call of divine grace to the household of Christ, and the immense privileges therein bestowed, are represented as a marriage-feast prepared by a king for the nuptials of his son. To this wedding festivity many had been invited, and every thing was prepared for their reception. Strangely enough, however, at the appointed hour they refused to come; and at his

repeated calls they treated his messengers with contempt, and even put some of them to death. The dignity of the offended monarch was obliged to take vengeance on these rebellious subjects, and to open the royal palace to those who were not at first invited. The servants "went into the highways and gathered together all they found, both bad and good, and the wedding was filled with guests." One can hardly fail to see how our Lord here refers to the Jewish nation, of whom He came after the flesh, and who were His chosen people, first called to the graces of the old law and the riches of the gospel. They had refused to accept this election of the divine mercy. Even the prophets were rejected by them, and their hands were stained by the blood of many of God's servants from the very beginning of the holy line. Now when the fulness of time came, and the nuptial feast was prepared, and God became incarnate, they refused the last and greatest offer of love, seized the king's son, and put him to an ignominious death. The purposes of God were not, however, to be frustrated. The lost sheep of the house of Israel, to whom our Lord came, were set aside by their own acts, and the Gentiles were

called to the banquet of the unsearchable riches of divine love. The poor and the outcast, those who had not heard of the heavenly king, were bidden to the marriage-feast. The sceptre passed from Judah, the sacrifice from Jerusalem, the holy city was laid in the dust, and God prepared another holy city and another centre of unity for His elect.

Yet all this freedom of the royal banquet was not without conditions. No one was allowed to enter without the wedding-garment, nor to remain in the royal presence without the preparation of holiness. All the impure and defiled are to be cast into exterior darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, even as the unhappy man who was bound hand and foot, and excluded from the marriage supper. "Many are called, but few are chosen." Many are called to the wedding and to the graces of Christ on earth, who shall not be allowed to enter the nuptial chamber when the bridegroom cometh. The church in the world is the ante-chamber of the heavenly palace, and yet not all who crowd her portals shall partake of the eternal banquet, nor sit down with the spouse in his kingdom. We see the end of our perseverance in the

glory of the triumphant church which S. John saw.

A voice came out from the throne, saying: Praise ye our God, all His servants: and you that fear Him, little and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and as the voice of many waters and as the voice of great thunders, saying: Alleluia, for the Lord our God the omnipotent, hath reigned. Let us be glad and rejoice and give glory to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come and His wife hath prepared herself. And to her it had been granted that she should clothe herself with fine linen, glittering and white. For the fine linen is the justifications of saints. And he said to me, write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.* “And one of the ancients answered and said to me: Who are these that are clothed with white robes, and whence do they come? And I said to him: My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me: These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of

* Apocalypse, xix. 5-9.

God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell over them. They shall not hunger nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb who is in the midst of them shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”* “And I saw, and behold a Lamb stood on Mount Sion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder; and the voice which I heard was as of harpers harping on their harps. And they sang as it were a new canticle before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the ancients, and no man could say the canticle but those three hundred and forty-four thousand who were purchased from the earth. These are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first fruits to God and to the Lamb.”† These passages of revelation,

* Apoc. vii. 13-17

† Apoc. xiv. 1-4.

explaining the gospel of this day, lead us to consider the great mercy of God's election to the visible church, the conditions of perseverance, and the felicity of those who, faithful unto death, are welcomed as eternal guests in the nuptial chamber of the Lamb.

I. It is impossible to magnify the love which has chosen us out of so many for the communion of the visible church, which has given us as it were the first invitations to the marriage supper. All the promises of Christ and all His sanctifying graces are in and through His church, to which alone appertains the covenant of salvation. That God will deal justly with all, we know, and reward or punish every one according to his deserts. Each one will be judged for, first, that light which he professed and was bound to improve. Yet we sometimes forget that our salvation is of the free mercy of our Redeemer, who was not bound by any principle of justice to interpose as He has done in our behalf. If God gives to every one what he merits, there can be no injustice if He, in the exercise of His choice, give graces to some which He does not give to others. He is not bound to give the same graces to all. The church is His institution

for teaching and saving fallen man by the application of the fruits of His passion. Those who reject it through their own fault cannot hope for eternal life, because they refuse the means of salvation appointed. Those who know nothing of it, or who are so placed that they cannot reasonably know any thing of it, will be excusable for not belonging to it; but they are without the great help it affords, and must stand their trial and judgment without its supernatural assistance. To attain the rewards of heaven, it is absolutely necessary to be without sin. If Catholics find it a labor requiring all their vigilance to free themselves from mortal sin, it must be far more difficult for those who are in the way of nature, without the great graces which God gives in His church. Nothing can be plainer than these truths, and they show us how great is the mercy which has called us, and without any merit of ours, to the communion of the one fold, which the Holy Ghost calls "His body, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all." We made none of the plans of salvation. We have only to accept them. And our Lord said to Nicodemus, "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the

kingdom of God." And when we are baptized, we are baptized by the one Spirit into the one Body. Those, then, whom Christ has called into His visible church are happy indeed through His gracious invitation. They may have come from the highways, from the poor in this world's goods, but they are rich in heavenly treasure. Here the great King dispenses His favors, here He feeds with His own life, and prepares the banquet on which the just shall eternally rejoice, when the bridegroom shall come, and His spouse shall make herself ready. Let us rightly value the electing love of God, and pray that we may use it well, since "many are called and few are chosen."

II. For the election to the visible church is not the certainty of our salvation. Conditions are required on our part, and if we are not faithful we shall lose every grace of our vocation, and be forever excluded from the nuptial chamber, to make way for others more worthy than ourselves. Without holiness no one can see the Lord. Without sanctifying grace no one can be admitted to the everlasting joys of the bridegroom and the bride. This is the wedding garment absolutely required by the master of the

feast. By Baptism we received the white robe and were new-created in sanctifying grace. To enter heaven and claim its rewards we must appear before God without spot or stain, in that undefiled garment which he gave us at the happy moment of our new birth. The innocent then, little children cut off in their baptismal purity, and such as have never soiled their consciences by any mortal sin, can arise in God's holy place and sit down in His kingdom. Their title is secure, their part in the company of saints has never been lost. Their clean hands and pure hearts shall be at home in that temple where the Lamb is the unfading light.

But inasmuch as those who preserve their baptismal innocence are few in number, how shall the sinner against his vocation regain his lost inheritance? How shall the unclean wash away the stains and put on again the wedding garment? Thanks be to the wonderful mercies of redemption, the master of the feast has provided for even this necessity, has found a way to purify the impure, to restore health to the leprous and outcast. Let us not, however, in the abundance of the divine clemency forget the great evil of sin, nor think that to be a light

disease which can only be removed at so great a cost. The conditions of purification are sincere sorrow, humble confession, patient mortification, and life-long obedience. Nothing less can accomplish the work of restoration, nor can the sinner alter or modify the way of recovery prescribed by the great physician. True contrition, implying detestation and renunciation of sin, is above all things necessary, for without it graces and sacraments will not avail. The penitent must go down the deep valley of humiliation and learn the exceeding bitterness of his offences. Then all his grievous burden he must bring to the feet of Christ's ministers, where by humble confession he can hear the absolving words of the Lord Himself. He can find pardon in no other way. Here alone the cords of sin are loosed, and the dead are restored to life. Here from the open Heart of Calvary fall the drops of the precious blood with power to cleanse even that which is most vile. Vainly shall the sinner seek elsewhere this grace. If death overtake him before this confession be made, the angels of vengeance shall claim him as their own, and bind him hand and foot and cast him into the eternal darkness. If

he delay to seek for pardon, the sins of his youth, or manhood, or old age shall corrupt in his soul, inclining him powerfully to evil, and urging him amid the shadows of sense, which are only an anticipation of that rayless gloom which one day shall settle upon the lost. And can I not be saved in any other way, says the sinner who for many years has never knocked at the door of mercy? Is God so severe that he binds me up to one only way of life? Yes, fellow-sinner, there is but one way of salvation, opened to you and me by undeserved mercy. Shall we accept it or refuse it? This is the momentous question. On the answer to it hangs eternity. There is but one gospel, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism. "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Nothing can take the place of obedience, no charity to the poor, no zeal for God's house, no fidelity to the duties of life, can, without this, save your souls. Oh, think of that outer darkness, where fiends blaspheme God, where the voice of joy is never heard, where the song of the bridegroom and bride comes not, and look up to that nuptial chamber where the Lamb gathers in His elect in raiment glit-

tering and white, and then choose between life and death.

The Sacrament of Penance, with all its stores of grace, is not, however, like the washing of regeneration. It leaves a work behind, it requires the living fruits of contrition, and demands perseverance to the end. It places the pilgrim in the way of his complete purification, strengthens him for the journey, but leaves all to his fidelity. By mortification, by entire renunciation of the occasion of sin, by fervor in good works, he can regain all he has lost, pay even his debt to divine justice, and be ready to go out to meet the Bridegroom when He cometh. Yet vainly in any other way shall he seek the purification of his soul. Lukewarmness in God's service, relapses into sin, compromises with the world, will only increase his obligation to punishment, and render his salvation more and more doubtful. Alas, how little do we realize the importance of our probation, and the rigor of that judgment we shall so soon undergo! Do we need to be taught that our God is a consuming fire, that His name is holy, that sanctity is his dearest attribute? Where shall the lost souls go who are excluded from the marriage-

feast? What is that outer darkness of which the gospel speaks? Let the abyss answer with its eternal fires, whence all grace is forever withdrawn, where the smoke of their torment ascendeth without end. What terrible necessity forced the wrath of the Almighty to kindle that fire, to build the walls of that everlasting prison? You will find it in the purity of the divine nature, and in the malignity of sin, an evil so great that it would, were it possible, dethrone the Most High, and pollute the very air of heaven. You will find it in the necessity that the Lord omnipotent must reign, and put down all enemies and every rebellious intelligence beneath His feet.

Look again into that burning lake, which the Lamb slain overlooks from Mount Sion, and refreshes with His grace; that purifying fire which burns out the stains of the imperfect, brings back by pain the innocence of Baptism, and teaches the soul how rightly to worship God's purity. Let this sight impress on our hearts the lesson of the gospel, the value of sanctifying grace, and the danger of losing it. Called by God to the gifts of the visible church, honored above so many others by the gracious

invitation of our king, shall we be ready when the hour arrives, when the nuptials shall be celebrated on high, and the unending joy of the Bridegroom and the bride shall begin? Or shall it be our unhappy lot to stand at the heavenly portals, deprived of sanctifying grace, without the wedding garment, and exiles forever from our true home? Fellow-citizens of the saints, inheritors of the celestial kingdom, aye more, members of Christ, the King's Son, shall we be cast out from our Father's house to bear the doom of apostates, the woes that shall fall upon Babylon? "Woe, woe, that great city Babylon, that mighty city; for in one hour is thy judgment come. The fruits of the desire of thy soul are departed from thee. The voice of harpers and of musicians shall no more be heard in thee. The light of a lamp shall no more shine in thee, and the voice of the bridegroom and the bride shall no more be heard in thee. Woe, woe to that great city, for in one hour she is made desolate."

III. Far, rather, would we contemplate the felicity of those who by faith and good works have kept their principality, and are welcomed to the eternal feast which the Master has pre-

pared for His chosen. The joys of the nuptial chamber and of the wedding festivity are poor images of the rewards of the saints, when peace shall overflow their hearts, when the glory of God shall illumine them, and they shall see Him as He is, and become like Him. Revelation seizes upon human words and created splendor to paint the holy city where the nuptials shall be celebrated, and the gorgeousness of that house which has been prepared for the bride of the Lamb. "Its light is like unto a jasper stone, as crystal. And the building of the wall thereof was of jasper stone: and the city itself pure gold, like to clear glass. The foundations of the walls are adorned with all manner of precious stones. And the twelve gates are twelve pearls. There is no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof. The city needeth not sun nor moon to shine on it, for the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. This is the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." All that the eye hath ever desired or the imagination ever painted, shall be far exceeded in the tabernacle where

the infinite Beauty shall reveal itself to created hearts, where we shall be strengthened to gaze upon the very face of God, and Him who took our nature and crowned it in the inaccessible glories of the throne. There shall the soul's every want be filled up, and desire shall cease in the fruition of every faculty of our being. There shall be rest from labor, from conflict, from suffering. There the pilgrim shall lay down his cross, when the voice of the bridegroom shall bid him enter into his unchanging home. There the soldier shall take off his well-tried armor, where no enemy can ever again challenge the battle. There the penitent shall put off the sackcloth by which he kept himself safe from sin, and wipe all tears away when he enters those golden portals to be with the virgin train who follow the Lamb. Memory itself shall have no power to chasten the exultation of the victor, as he passes in triumph to the inner court where are found "the justifications of the saints," the white and glittering robes which have been washed in the blood of Calvary. There shall the King and His Son sit down to the banquet, where angels and saints, cherubim and seraphim shall tune their harps to the new song of triumph.

O, what are the vanities of earth and all its fairest splendors compared to a scene like this, or its wreaths of gold, when likened to the unfading crowns of the just! O happy penitence that gains for us such a reward! O blessed pilgrimage which, through all its varied trials or sorrows, leads to the glorious end, the true end of man, the possession of the sovereign good, the everlasting embrace in the arms of the eternal Father who pitied us, the Lamb who died for us, the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us!



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